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# The Massachusetts Review *Autumn 1960*

A QUARTERLY OF LITERATURE THE ARTS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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## Glenn Tinder

# Liberals and Masses: the Challenge of Communication

MUST A LIBERATED and empowered populace become a mass? This is to ask whether a *demos* delivered from economic bondage, unrestrained by deference for traditional superiors, and possessed of ultimate authority in the state, can possibly be discriminating enough to listen to those who truly have something to say and to disregard those who do not. A populace which cannot be moved from within, by addresses to the spirit, will almost inevitably be moved from without, as an object is moved; it will be a mass. The question is, in more specifically political terms, whether democracy can offer a rational and dignified way of making political decisions. An affirmative answer emerges neither from the history of the slave-based and short-lived Greek democracies nor from America's agrarian and secluded past. Yet we cannot readily accept a negative answer, and thus we feel the uncertainty bearing with particular intensity on the contemporary war-imperilled Western democracies, where the multitudes are perhaps more free from the burdens of slavery, poverty and political violence than ever before in history.

This question is of special concern to the liberal—to one whose supreme political ideal is liberty—for two reasons. In the first place, the liberal is by the logic of his position necessarily an ally of the common man. A philosophy of freedom is based on respect for the person. While this respect prompts the liberal often to be a defender of minorities against majorities, it causes him also to resist all institutions and attitudes which would fit human beings into final categories and classes;

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it renders him a protagonist, in some fashion or other, of equality and of the multitudes.

In the second place, however, the liberal is being forced by large and distressing accumulations of evidence to recognize that an egalitarian society may be very far from a good one. The dismay which Ortega y Gasset several decades ago expressed in *The Revolt of the Masses* today is felt in some degree by almost all observers. Some of the most intelligent, with Ortega, see the reigning multitudes as threatening the very survival of Western culture. Joseph Wood Krutch, for example, suggests in the course of a careful and perceptive discussion of mass society that what we know as "man"—the offspring of a process of cultivation that reached its height several centuries before the beginning of the Christian era—may have begun to disappear about seventy-five years ago. Others have noticed that while a populace which is oppressed demands liberty, a populace enthroned seems often indifferent to liberty and is possessed of appallingly effective powers for destroying it. While many ages have deplored the injuries the multitudes have suffered, today it is more often necessary to deplore injuries the multitudes inflict.

On these grounds, liberals are involved in a quandary which it is by no means certain they will succeed in escaping. On the one hand, they cannot with good conscience continue to dedicate themselves unreservedly to the cause of political and economic equality; although a number of the old inequities remain, one can no longer believe that in working to remove them he is at grips with the ultimate problems of civilization. On the other hand, liberals are utterly debarred from turning back. The project of raising up a new aristocracy seems in our day futile even if it were not almost certainly out of accord with liberal premises. The dilemma lies in this, that it seems possible to realize a good society neither with nor without the common people.

There remain, of course, the traditional liberal sentiments of fear regarding majority tyranny and determination to protect minorities. These attitudes take on added relevance at a time when in place of a majority there frequently stands a whole

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society and in place of a minority a solitary individual. But liberals cannot meet the challenge of mass society merely by resolving to protect individuals against the masses. This would be to abandon concern for the multitudes, and thus to violate the liberal commitment to the dignity of all persons. Such a posture, furthermore, is probably incompatible with security of liberty for nonconforming individuals. The masses have been feared largely because their power seemed so crushing, their surveillance so inescapable. A society given over to the control of an illiberal and vulgar mass is not likely in the long run to allow those who are not of the mass to be free. Thus liberals confront a great wall, which they themselves have helped to erect and must in some ways defend, but which lies directly athwart their path.

To state the problem in this fashion is to indicate, very roughly, the answer to it. Liberals are compelled to set themselves in opposition to the masses and to do everything possible to by-pass them and even to destroy them—not, however, for the sake primarily of elites or even of minorities generally, but for the sake of the people themselves. It is in relation to this aim that the task of communication is of sovereign importance. The demagogue hopes by treating people as objects to make them such; thus they are rendered components of a mass. The liberal must try, by treating people as subjects, to break the mass.

To understand the possibility of such an achievement it is necessary to interpret accurately the meaning of the protests concerning mass society. Against what are they really directed? Roughly, it may be said that they have reference to a social order which is experienced as undifferentiated and opaque—as a vast, meaningless reality standing over against the individual. Ortega observes that the concept of the masses has less to do with numbers than with weight; it concerns what is felt to be a dark and obtrusive quality in collective existence. The concept of the masses may be said to mirror also the individual's sense that he is estranged from all, with every conceivable ally ranged somehow on the side of the menacing order of society.

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In sum, it is a certain onerous and desolating spirit which is the distinguishing mark of mass society.

This points to the significant fact that the dominion of the multitudes, however closely involved in the matter, is not of the essence of mass society. What Ortega refers to as "the mass man" might conceivably, in a mass society, be in the minority. And it is not unreasonable to see mass society as predating in its origins the main social, economic and political victories of the multitudes. This is partially confirmed by the fact that the earliest outcries against "the revolt of the masses"—those coming from Kierkegaard and Tocqueville—were heard during the first half of the nineteenth century. In this same connection, is it going too far to view Marx's philosophy, despite its preoccupation with the enslavement of the multitudes, as allied with the attacks on mass society? It is not difficult to see the nineteenth-century bourgeois as a "mass man"; and, broadly described, Marx's analysis of capital is simply a picture of a social system which in relation to its members is alien and oppressive. It may be felt, however, that numbers must have something to do with mass society. It must be admitted that this is so; but it is suggested that the relationship is less intimate and necessary than it is often assumed to be. What is perhaps the most plausible historical interpretation is based on the proposition that mass society originated with the repression, rather than the elevation, of the multitudes; the estrangement of individuals was reflected in various economic injustices, above all in those entailed by an unregulated wage system. These injustices, however, bound together those who felt themselves strangers in their own society, and consequently there came into being a brotherhood of the alienated. This was the proletariat, the repository of socialist hopes. It was assumed that the elevation of this fraternity of outcasts would destroy the alienating power. What we have witnessed, however, is the incorporation of the multitudes in the alien order. While the people did not create mass society, by joining it they rendered its empire more far-reaching and inescapable. Despite our approach to economic justice, alienation is at least in one respect more profound now than it was a century ago: the proletarian

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fellowship of the alienated has been largely dissolved; each one is now solitary, and feels himself opposed not merely by a class but by the mass. The crucial fact with which those who staked their historic hopes on the proletariat failed to reckon is that only a relatively small number of persons are markedly creative. To admit the multitudes to the privileges of an uncreative order, therefore, was far more likely to strengthen that order than to transfigure it.

But while the common people, judged by the highest standards, are uncreative, they are not necessarily unreceptive. While the ordinary man cannot initiate a significantly creative act, he can in appropriate circumstances appreciate such an act. It is often casually asserted that the people do not want such things as good music and intelligent political speeches; and it is undoubtedly true that they will often choose the vulgar and the sentimental when they are given little opportunity, and no encouragement, to choose anything else. But anyone who truly respects the great works of civilized life—the art, the literature, and even the rhetoric—knows that they are genuinely attractive, and that while it requires genius to create them, unusual gifts are not needed for enjoying them. That this is not only true, but that it can be of historical significance, is shown, if nowhere else, in ancient Greece. There drama as subtle as men have ever produced was enjoyed by the *demos*; much of the sculpture and architecture on the Acropolis was commissioned by a great popular leader, Pericles, and paid for with public funds; and ordinary men followed debates in the Assembly and the courts which, judging from the evidence we have, cannot always have been lacking in complexity and brilliance. This receptivity is the hope of the liberal; and those who deny it are more profoundly pessimistic than they often realize, for they pose an antithesis between justice and civilization.

It is, then, by trying to consummate acts of true communication with the people that liberals can combat the overwhelming reality of mass society. To communicate is to by-pass—and to contribute to the dissolution of—the mass, which may be defined as society bereft of its receptivity. Communication is clearly not merely a political undertaking. But it is in part

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political, and an excellent example of fidelity to creative insight and to the task of communicating it to a people is Stevenson's campaign in the 1952 presidential election. This example demonstrates that the liberal spirit is attended by no guarantee of political success. It cannot yet be known with absolute certainty that even in the long run the people will respond to those who treat them as persons. But the possibility that they will would seem to justify every last political risk.

Are courage, insight, and other moral and intellectual qualities on the part of aspirants to leadership alone the prerequisites for achieving communication? Or are there new techniques to be developed? No one is likely to maintain that our minds should be closed to new techniques. The Nixon-Kennedy television confrontations illustrate the possibility of discovering useful but untried ways of presenting issues publicly. The "mass media" have caused many misgivings because of the impersonality and centralization which seem to render them such potent instruments of commercial and political propaganda. Yet the use of such devices, reaching audiences divided into tiny and widely-scattered private groups, seems free of some of the dangers incurred when actual crowds are assembled and addressed; this perhaps presents an opportunity which liberals should learn to exploit. Beyond all considerations of this kind, however, the point of primary relevance is surely that contemporary man's facilities for communication are far more impressive than his ability to use them. Truman Capote is reported to have remarked of a book he disliked that it was not writing but only typing; it could be said correspondingly that most of what is seen on television is not communication but only broadcasting. Clearly communication is primarily a moral and intellectual venture and we are seriously misled when we allow ourselves—as of course we repeatedly have—to think of it primarily in any other way.

The extent to which it is likely that liberals will be the ones who feel obliged to run the risks of attempted communication can be perceived by noting what appears to be a changing rela-



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tionship between conservatives and the people. It has become customary to regard the multitudes as given naturally to radicalism. "To-day the claims of the masses amount to nothing less than a determination to destroy utterly society as it now exists," cried Gustave Le Bon near the end of the last century. This is a view shared by those who oppose and those who favor revolution, and it is expressed, in varying ways, in the works both of Burke and of Marx. It is a view, further, for which the long history of inequality and injustice has provided some empirical justification. The result of this presumption of radicalism is that conservatism has been imbued with a deep mistrust of the people and is associated with defense of the privileges and responsibilities of aristocracies.

Yet according to an ancient political insight the multitudes are inclined towards *two* extremes: revolution and total immobility. "The Body of the People," wrote Halifax, in the seventeenth century, "are generally either so dead that they cannot move, or so mad that they cannot be reclaimed." Corresponding to this notion of the dual proclivities of the people, two contrasting kinds of mass-appeal can be distinguished: the one which usually receives the epithet "demagoguery" and incites to action and to change, and the other a demagoguery of complacency which lulls the people into thoughtless passivity. Thus Thucydides, in analyzing the degeneration of leadership in Athens after Pericles' death, describes both the rabble-rousing Cleon and the soothing, albeit indecisive, Nicias. In the last decade Americans have gone through both the unreasoning excitement of the McCarthy period and the somnolence of the Eisenhower years.

From the vantage point of this dichotomy one can gain a rather startling impression of the relationship of conservatives and populace in our time. The equalization of material well-being, not to speak of increasing equality in the social and political realms, is almost certainly undermining the popular tendency towards radicalism, while strengthening vastly the opposite tendency—that towards torpor and inaction. This in turn seems likely to draw together conservatives and the people.



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The effort of the traditional upper classes in the nineteenth century paternalistically to maintain the subordination of groups socially beneath them has failed. But conservatives have discovered to their gratification that the multitudes, now free to indulge their supposed radicalism, are inclined to side with the *status quo*. Is this not essentially the discovery made in recent years by the Republican Party in the United States, by the Christian Democrats in Germany, and by Prime Minister Macmillan and his Tory colleagues in England? We may expect more and more to hear the refrain, sung for the multitudes by those who once hardly either dared or deigned to address them, "You never had it so good."

This is to say that conservatives are apt to become the main supporters of mass society, for they can be expected increasingly to cultivate the demagoguery of complacency. The demagogue is one skilled in reducing a multitude of persons to a mass. His vocation lies in obstructing thought and extinguishing the consciousness of freedom. In these ways he renders large numbers simultaneously subject to a kind of mechanical determination. For this to be done in behalf of inaction, rather than action, has no apparent bearing on the moral nature of the deed. It is widely recognized that "McCarthyism" constituted a kind of moral test for Americans. It is far less widely recognized how questionable it is whether we have passed this test. It has been noted by more than one observer that the American people have been no less impervious to communication since Eisenhower's era of contentment smothered McCarthyite hysteria than they were when the Wisconsin demagogue was most powerful. It is probably easier now than ever before in history, due to the removal of the major economic grievances of the multitudes, for the respectable, the moralistic and the kindly to engage in the demagoguery of complacency and thus to promote and sustain the qualities of the mass.

In this situation the liberal's role in society must be reinterpreted. The liberal mood has traditionally been one of openness to the new; it has been a mood of creativity. Conveniently, the multitudes, even when reduced to masses, could

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be a creative force because of their predilection for change. A conservative mass, however, while posing no threat directly to established institutions, cannot be a creative force because it is opposed to change of whatever kind. In the long run this could be even more destructive than popular radicalism because, as Kierkegaard points out, it is likely to drain of significance all which is ostensibly preserved. Thus the liberal—hitherto often assisted by popular impulses—is apt to find that his task increasingly becomes that of keeping alive the creative temper against the resistance of the populace.

Like every social problem, that of mass society has a personal dimension which a serious individual inevitably experiences with some intensity entirely apart from the thought he devotes to his society and civilization. The contemporary heir of the Hellenic and the Hebraic-Christian cultures is drawn powerfully by two different forces. *Eros*, the love of beauty, morality, and truth, moves him toward excellence and impels him to cultivate an attitude of discrimination. *Agape*, the love of one's fellow human beings, is an emotion of compassion and leads to the acceptance of all persons. One is classical in spirit, and the other Christian; one is embodied particularly in aristocratic order, and the other is reflected above all in democratic openness. Generally these forces are in conflict. To live disciplined by the effort to understand and to achieve what is truly estimable in all realms of value seems often to require, as Nietzsche insists, judgment and even cruelty; but Christianity demands that one refrain from judging and try to realize in himself an all-encompassing tenderness. The ensuing tension no person of the West can altogether escape; but unless that tension is relieved it is bound to bring the spiritual anguish, the *anomie*, which results from conflicting or collapsing moral imperatives.

Communication appears to be the single way in which Western man can reconcile the upward drive to the absolute with the obligation of universal love. If communication with all persons is possible, a life governed both by classical discipline and by Christian compassion likewise is possible; the highest places of

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human vision can be opened to all, and compassion can be guided by the drive toward the absolute. If universal communication is not possible, however, life is split in two and man is compelled to choose between an esoteric (or even despotic) cultivation of excellence on the one hand, and an indiscriminate acceptance of all men and of the importance of all ordinary needs and desires on the other. The former alternative is at least partially exemplified in Plato, with the class stratification and "noble lies" of his ideal city; the latter is to some extent typified in Rousseau's attack on traditional culture and his corresponding glorification of the sentiments of the common people. If man were compelled to choose between these two extremes, his situation would be profoundly tragic. This fate is set aside, however, if the few exalted by *eros*, and the many embraced by *agape*, can become a community.

It is perhaps the mission of liberalism at the present time to show that this is possible. It is doubtful that liberals have ever undertaken a more difficult charge. It has not been many years since they could concentrate on removing the economic and social disabilities suffered by the people, while telling themselves that when this was accomplished the proletariat would raise itself from its intellectual and cultural degradation. Now it is apparent, however, that there is a degradation which can accompany social equality and pervasive prosperity. Like climbers who discover, on attaining what they had taken to be the summit, that they have only reached a plateau, we can see now that we are separated from the good society by terrain far more forbidding than any we had foreseen. Thus liberals are challenged to achieve an equality more exalted than that pertaining merely to social status or material possessions; they are called on to move toward the equality of unrestricted communication. This higher equality is the irreducible demand of democracy. The British historian Edward Hallett Carr succinctly characterized the challenge to liberalism when he wrote, "We should be nearer the mark, and should have a far more convincing slogan, if we spoke of the need, not to defend democracy, but to create it."

## *John Woods*

### TO THE WAITERS FOR MIRACLES

You will not gather pears again in blue aprons,  
Nor poach the buff deer.  
There are no kings worth dying for.  
Nor will you see, the black loam turned,  
The wind come back, and wheel again  
In its green springing.

No luck will save you, nor faith  
In a letterhead. No benefactor shall name you heir.  
For names shall die, and no horseman  
Suddenly visible, non-stop serum,  
Nor bread from stone  
Shall stop the fall of stone.

No woman again, no, not ever,  
Her hour come upon her, shall lie in the beak  
Of God, deaf in the artillery  
Of wings, and make of her own blood and milk  
A thin bearer of flesh for more or less  
Than our skin's sake.

Nor you, singer, worn by song  
To the quick of your throat, nor you,  
Poet, riding the undulant wave of language  
Near coasts where man in the shot dark  
Fights your ancient war in chaos  
And animal cries . . .

# Anne Halley

## Between Wars: *Poems from a Series*

### THE CHOSEN

Always prepared for revelation,  
when Grandfather brought the pheasants home for Christmas,  
I sat behind the tree and wouldn't talk;  
they should find me reading a big book,  
whispering poetry.

There were angels continually in my mind, then,  
or a bareback rider,  
something with spangles, wings, four or five white horses,  
and long hair floating out to catch a star.

I liked the Christmas tree, self-reflective, baubles  
you see yourself in, all surrounded by lit candles  
that make a real halo, liked princes, crowns, roses,  
liked having my hair curled,  
waiting to be chosen.

And many of my kind and country  
were chosen at dead of night, heard the big boots  
crash upstairs, terror in tinkling glass, while  
I wore a crown of flowers on my seventh birthday,  
curtseyed, made penwipers, learned to write in ink,  
every Christmas recited a long poem,  
ate raisin cake on Sundays  
in sunny rooms full of Sunday flowers and clean air.  
How can I say the terror  
grew there? That one day the marvelous bower  
behind the tree and the winter garden  
among the near-dragons, moons, fabulous, spiralling over the  
doorway,  
said to me, yes, there is a secret for you:  
be afraid.

## TANTE ULLA, TANTE DIDI, TANTE TIENCHEN

Tante Ulla, Tante DiDi, Tante Tienchen,  
Oh wie trau-er-ig, Oh friends of my mother,  
girlfriends, old friends, Oh my godmothers  
of whipped-cream torte, doll clothes, masquerades and boat trips,  
of summery garden-house picnics,  
all for children with good manners  
and all unmarried. Oh untold hordes of German  
female second cousins, friends' friends, pensioners, teachers,  
and many of you widowed.

Tante DiDi, Tante Tienchen, Tante Ulla,  
whose brothers and lovers tossed their schoolcaps  
so gallantly, turned them in for helmets,  
cheer the volunteers of '09, the class of 1910. Oh their nephews  
and greatnephews froze as cruelly  
in broken boots before Russia in the '40's.  
All ladies so proud, so mannerly, conventional,  
pouring out coffee, lifting sugar in tongs  
at the goldflooded breakfast window,  
embroidering in hoops, and quarreling  
with the slovenly, uniform-mad Mädchen  
who would oversleep, be disrespectful.

You too, Tanten, starved and skulked in cellars,  
foraged for potatoes in back gardens,  
more than once, took walks to the country  
to scrounge a half of sausage. I know you grew thin in a passion  
of march-time music, suffered, burned out for a nation.  
Did you also say Sieg Heil in your hearts,  
Basta, Prosit, to the windborne stench  
you might not dare to know? Tante Tienchen  
we visited for plum cake,  
an old old lady on a cane, martial up the mountain,  
and she said, Oh how they have humbled us.  
It cannot be borne.  
Struck her cane on the ground in Freiburg, 1950,  
We must not give in.

## EMBLEMS, 1936

Can you know how it was? There were little dripping fountains,  
the inn with icy linen sheets, so heavy,  
and a fogged dawn when the Easter fires  
were dots up and down the mountain.

Trips across a small country, tree-lined roads,  
narrow and twisting, through plow-rippled hillsides,  
then another landscape, purple-flecked, flat.

There are great boulders piled to mark  
an ancient burial. Here you lost the kite, a sulphurous  
storm was coming up. Did you miss the stork,  
tall in his nest? He is red-legged in the cross-piece gable  
of a thatch roof. He brings luck.

This is a village, the main street cobbled.

The geese honk, swarming.

Buttercups and daisies,  
and the ditch has a thick scum,  
stagnant, green, growing.

Do you know sun-slippery paths in woods with porcupines  
end in an overflow of yellow wheat?

You can crack seeds between your teeth,  
pick garlands, sing, dance in a circle.

Red poppies, blue cornflowers, gold sheaves of wheat,  
I have a white dress,  
we give thanks for the harvest.

No. Fat tourist in your postcard mind.

Garland, lucky stork, and Easter fire  
are gathered and garnered; one lightheaded travel morning  
you stood in a rose arena, dew-silvered brick, not quite finished;  
steps stretched far into treetops.

Jungbrunnen. What was it for? In your sleep  
always that giant circle  
filled with gathering Jungvolk, tangled thickness,  
raised arms and banners and muscled swell: burst mouths.

Nevertheless, this mill on this water  
across this field, also that walled garden.

That parched woman with the twitch in her cheek.

Your name on these stones.



## AMERICAN REPRISE

The Unitarian minister  
was pinkjowled, worldly, not austere.  
I held my flowers hard. They shook,  
and our respective parents took  
the tragic view. They were as pale  
as we were green. No one could tell  
if this would work, or if it ought.  
I can't remember that I thought  
of you, jobs, money, babies, if  
this too were something to forgive . . .

At any rate, it was not bliss.  
Too much forewarned, our wedding was  
as grim as any truce. I blame  
myself still, and my ingrown shame,  
my gaggle of Germanic genes,  
and my intemperate fear of change.

My father etymologized  
the name by which he was not pleased.  
Your father could not eat our food.  
Baptized and circumcised, we stood,  
the queasy creedless who appeased  
no one but Emersonian god.

The signs and portents were not good,  
though all drank wine. For weeks I could  
not keep my breakfast down; I choked  
and, gagging, wept. At last we looked  
on our done deed and separate son,  
straight as a weed, eye-dazzling, strong.

*Gordon Browne*

## The Pole

TOGETHER he and his father carried the sturdy, fifteen-foot cedar pole from the back of the garage, where he had stored it, out to the front of the house. Then he began digging. At the three-foot level the posthole digger struck hard clay, and his father brought the garden hose over to pour water into the hole. Wetting the clay let him get another three or four inches, but that was all. It would have to be enough.

His father insisted on fastening the platform to the pole himself. It was only a three-foot square, and he fussed about that. "What if you go to sleep, Arnold?"

"I won't, Dad. I'm not going to be up there forever."

"How long?"

"I don't know."

His father drove all the screws himself, measuring carefully to be sure that each of the four metal braces marked a quarter of the circumference of the pole. When he had finished, they lifted the pole together and set it into the hole. Then his father sat down on the grass and rested while he filled and packed the dirt around the base.

His father wiped at his glasses because they were steaming up, then took them off and began polishing them. "I'm not trying to argue with you, Arnold. Just tell me again why you have to do this. Please."

"It just seems the right way to make my voice heard. I can't explain." He regretted his irritated tone when he saw the curtain of hurt lower again over his father's eyes. "I'd tell you if I could, Dad. Honest, I would. After Doug was here last week,

## *The Pole*

this just came on me so strongly that I knew I had to do it. Is it so bad a thing?"

His father looked away from him and was busy with his glasses. "No, of course it isn't bad. It's very good. It's just that—well, have you asked yourself if it might not be just some kind of—of exhibitionism?"

"Yes. I don't think it is. It just came to me that there had to be a pole."

His father shrugged his acceptance. "You must do what you must do."

"Do you think Doug will understand?"

For a moment he feared his father might cry. "I don't know. Maybe. I'll try to make him understand. He loves you, Arnold. I know he does."

He shrugged and went back to tamping the earth. Doug was a child of light, a creature of the sun.

"Doug mostly loves the U.S. Air Force," he said.

His father stood up. "Doug is a fine pilot. And he is your brother."

"So is Khrushchev," he said. Then, sorry, he went and put his arm around his father, his dirty hand leaving a smear on his father's shirt.

After a bit, his father raised his head. "What can I get for you, Arnold?"

"Nothing now, Dad. I'm about ready."

The pole was set in the parkway, between the sidewalk and the street, at the corner of the driveway. He could put one sign on the street side and another facing the sidewalk. He would put the table of pamphlets in the driveway by the street so that drivers could reach it as well as pedestrians.

While he was setting out the pamphlets and tacking his signs to the pole, his father went back to the garage. A few moments later he reappeared, staggering under the weight and awkwardness of a section of ladder. Arnold quickly went to him and took it from him; then, so that he would not think there was a question of his ability to carry the ladder, asked him to examine the signs and give his judgment of them.

## *The Massachusetts Review*

The sign on the street side he had made himself. It said:

END THE  
ARMS RACE!  
ALL MEN  
ARE  
BROTHERS.

The one on the sidewalk side he had borrowed from an English Quaker poster he had seen. It said:

WILL YOU  
FEEL  
SECURE  
WHEN  
ALL  
NATIONS  
HAVE  
NUCLEAR WEAPONS  
?

His father stood and looked at each sign for several minutes. Then he looked along the quiet street, across the neat lawns and hedges to the homes of their neighbors. He shook his head and looked back to the signs, walking around the pole from one to the other. He paused by the little table of pamphlets and looked up at the platform. Standing there, polishing his glasses, he seemed strangely shrunken.

Arnold picked up the ladder and set it against the pole.

"Say goodbye to your mother," his father said.

He laughed. "I'm not going away."

His father frowned. "Just do it anyway. It'll make her happy."

He looked toward the house. His mother was standing just inside the screen door, watching them and wiping at her eyes with a handkerchief. He ran up the walk to the house, opened the door, and kissed her quickly.

She did not respond to his kiss. "I just hope you know what you're doing, that's all. Why do you have to do this crazy thing, Arnold?" She began to cry. "What'll people think?"

He turned away from her.

"Arnold, precious, be careful!"

## *The Pole*

He edged free of her grip on his arm and ran back down the walk. Now, at last, he could get up there.

His father touched him lightly on the arm. "Good luck."

"Thanks, Dad."

He climbed the ladder and inched over the edge of his platform. The pole swayed uncertainly but did not tip dangerously. When he had reached a sitting posture on top of the pole, he called, "O.K.," and his father took the ladder down and leaned it against the bushes beside the drive.

Nothing looked quite the same from his new position. His father, walking back up to the house, was foreshortened, as if he saw him in a trick mirror. Half a dozen chipping sparrows sat on the telephone wires only a few feet from him and ignored him. From the edge of the lawn in front of the house a stream of insects, ants probably, moved back and forth to an unidentifiable brown spot on the sidewalk, their bodies road-mapping their routes. He could see into a bedroom of the Fitches' house across the street where pictures were plastered all over the mirror of a dressing table. Probably Amy Fitch's. She was seventeen and a movie addict.

His watch said only 4:40. It would be another hour before the sun would really begin to lose its uncomfortable heat. From his perch the sky overhead looked the same, no nearer, no bluer, no less vast and mysterious. That was good. He would hate to solve the mystery of the sky. He sat and gazed up into it, feeling himself shrinking away as he always did, disappearing in the endless, endless, still beyond endlessness of the sky. What a good thing a sky was to cover a world with!

"Well, Arnold Paynter, what are you doing up there?"

His head had been back so long that, when he lowered it, he was momentarily dizzy. Then he saw Mrs. Turner standing on the walk, face turned up to him. He had thought first of holding an entirely silent vigil, but Mrs. Turner's rigid posture and tight lips demanded a response.

He could not quite look at her. "I'm trying to act for peace."

"You're what?"

"I'm trying to . . ."

## *The Massachusetts Review*

She turned and walked toward her house next door, at each step rapping the sidewalk with the umbrella which she carried at all times, in all weathers. "Crazy! Just plain crazy! Always was! Disgrace to the neighborhood!"

He would have to stop all this sky nonsense. If he were to do any good at all, he would have to prepare himself better for questions.

A TV repair truck turned into Claremont Road from Parker Street and moved slowly along as if the driver were looking for numbers. It stopped suddenly below him. The driver, a large, red-faced, smiling man leaned out and looked up at him.

"Hi! What's up?" He burst into loud laughter. "D'ja get it? 'What's up?'" He laughed again, then looked toward the sign. He studied it for a moment, then grinned again. "Stay with it, Mac. I'm with you. I'm a veteran myself." He disappeared into the truck, which resumed its slow progress along the street.

Two more cars passed, each slowing as it went by him, then picking up speed again. The air seemed cleaner where he was. The sunlight, angling in, made everything glow rose and gold—the stucco of the Fitches' house, the white clapboard of his own, even the needles of his mother's blue spruce, all rose and gold. Doug would be too high for this, too far above the earth to see the rose and gold.

"What the hell's the matter with you, Arnold? Why do you have to get mixed up with these freaky radicals? Grow up, will you, for God's sake?"

That was Doug all right. Never any unhealthy introspection for him. He was a child of light, a creature of the sun, always up and up and up for Doug. He would never willingly hurt anyone, but flying was fun, and the Air Force was full of great guys, and who was he to argue with the boys who really knew what was right about The Bomb, for God's sake?

The sun was back of the Fitches' chimney at last, and the rose and gold spread across the sky. More and more cars passed as neighbors came home from work, most of them slowing as they saw his sign. Mr. Fitch stopped in his driveway across the

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## *The Pole*

street and got out of his car. He was a tall, lean man with a large, purple-veined nose and tight, straight lips. He walked back across the street, moving stiffly, staring intently at the sign toward the street, not raising his eyes at all to the platform. He walked around the pole and read the other sign, then went back and read the first one again.

"Good evening," Arnold said.

Mr. Fitch did not look up but strode back to his house. A few minutes later he emerged wearing his Legion cap. Without another look at the pole, he recrossed the street and went up the walk to Arnold's front door. Arnold watched his mother open the door to him. At first Mr. Fitch did not go in, but finally he did.

A convertible, its top down, squealed into Claremont from Parker Street and ground to a halt below him. A young, bald-headed man in a sport shirt jumped out and began taking pictures of his signs, then of him. Another man, older and wearing a hat, called to him from the driver's seat.

"Hey, fellow, we're from *The Globe*. What's going on?"

He told the reporter who he was and where he lived and that he was twenty years old and was trying to act for peace, but he could not make him understand that he was not trying to set a record for pole-sitting. There were quite a few questions, but he was distracted from them by Mr. Fitch's sudden appearance, hurrying down the walk from his house. His mother stood in the doorway watching him go and wiping at her eyes. Mr. Fitch continued on across the street and into his own house. The reporters went away, and he was alone again.

At 6:15 his mother and father came down the walk. His mother carried a thermos bottle and two sandwiches. He asked his father to bring the ladder so that he could come down and go into the house to the toilet. They both looked happier, and his mother kissed him when he reached the ground.

When he got back to the foot of the pole, his father had removed the ladder. His mother began to cry as he put it up again.

"You aren't going back up there? You should hear what



## *The Massachusetts Review*

people're saying. Mr. Fitch says we haven't raised you right to be a patriot. Please, Arnold, don't go up there again."

He stuffed the thermos inside his shirt and the sandwiches into his pockets. "I have to, Mother."

At that moment Mrs. Turner called from her front doorway, "Arnold, you're on TV! Right on the 6:30 local news!"

Screen doors slammed all along the street, and his mother and father rushed toward the house, his mother running in a funny, grunting waddle. He climbed on up to the platform. A short time later his father returned and took the ladder down.

"We missed it," he said, "but your mother's watching channel six now in case it's on their news."

He ate his supper slowly, egg salad sandwiches and iced tea. The air was cooler now. He felt relaxed and peaceful. It was good to get back up to the platform and to swing his feet freely over the edge and to let the breeze blow on his forehead. The sun was riding the horizon between the Fitches' house and the Garners', stretching the shadow of his pole across Mrs. Turner's lawn to the side of her house.

He dropped the empty thermos to the grass at the foot of the pole and leaned back, bracing his hands on the sides of his platform. He closed his eyes and let the cool of the quiet evening eddy around him.

It was a good world, this world, where cool followed heat and water drought, where birth and death and joy and sorrow and love and hate balanced against each other and should cancel out, as in an equation, but, instead of nothing, left something that was real and belonged to God and not to men. What was it that was left? How to define it?

Perhaps he had gone to sleep. It was almost dark, and the street lights were on, and he was above them, looking down on the circles they made on the black street. There was a steady hum of noise and many cars. A group of people, maybe thirty or forty, stood on the sidewalk across from him, talking together and looking up at him. An ice cream truck, surrounded by children, was parked in front of the Garners'. Mr. Fitch and two other men in Legion caps walked back and forth be-

## *The Pole*

neath his pole. All the pamphlets were gone from his table.

Snatches of sound, jumbled and various, reached up to him. "The TV said he's a. . . ." "Jerry, stop chasing around and get in the car! You want a spanking?" "... the goddam commies would take over." "... been a funny kid ever since I knew him." "... brother in the Air Force. . . ." "Too damned yellow to fight. . . ." "Well, I think he's got guts."

Two cars turned spotlights on him briefly. Then one zoomed away, its souped-up motor roaring. The other followed close behind it.

"This was always a quiet neighborhood." "... his poor mother. . . ." "Of course, it would be nice, but you got to be practical." "My wife's brother was in one of them strange churches. Couldn't even drive a car on Sunday or. . . ."

No one spoke to him or called to him. Above the street lights as he was, he was probably nearly invisible to many of them.

Suddenly a loud, drawling voice hollered above the low murmurs, "Man, that's the biggest possum I ever did see up a tree."

The crowd laughed. After looking a bit, he located the owner of the voice, a thick-shouldered, blond-headed young man in a white T-shirt and faded jeans. He was leaning against an ancient sedan, drinking from a beer can.

He took the can from his lips and wiped them with the back of his hand. "Man, I'm with you," he hollered. "Let's all be brothers." He turned to Amy Fitch, standing on the lawn of her house, white shirt hanging out over her tan Bermuda shorts, her dark hair in a long pony-tail. "Come here, Sis, and give your dear old brother a kiss."

The crowd laughed again as he swept her into his big arms and kissed her, but, as he held the kiss and held it, the laughter died, and there was an uncomfortable shuffling.

Mr. Fitch and the other two men in Legion caps crossed the street. "That's enough," Mr. Fitch said. "That's enough."

The young man released her, and she stepped back, giggling and pressing her wrist against her mouth but looking at her father. From the car against which the young man had been leaning, another youth called,

## *The Massachusetts Review*

"Come on, Ralph. Let's get out of here. Carol's waiting."

The young man named Ralph made an obscene gesture at Mr. Fitch and climbed into the car, which edged through the crowd and disappeared. The men in Legion caps, walking straight now and in step, resumed their patrol beneath him.

There were no further incidents. Cars came and went, and the crowd stayed about the same size through the evening. It was ten o'clock before it began to diminish. His father came out then and picked up the thermos bottle.

"Do you want to go in to the bathroom, Arnold?" he called, and the onlookers laughed.

"No, Dad, I'm fine," he said, and his father hurried away.

He was feeling cramped, though, and very carefully managed to get to his feet and stretch. Standing, he was enough above all the ground lights so that vast numbers of stars, more than he had ever seen from his yard before, were visible. When he sat down, some disappeared, but it was still a rich night.

Only Mr. Fitch paced below him now, the other two men having gone into Mr. Fitch's house to rest. Perhaps a dozen cars lined the street, but the ice cream truck was long since gone, and the cluster of people opposite him was reduced to barely twenty. He began to feel sleepy and wondered if he should go in to bed and come out again in the morning.

A sedan sped in from Parker Street and stopped in the middle of the street below him. Three young men and two girls clambered out. He recognized the youth who had been called Ralph.

In a loud voice, Ralph said again, "That's the biggest possum I ever saw up in a tree!"

Everyone laughed again, and one of the two girls leaned heavily on his arm, squealing, "O, Ralph, honest!"

Ralph suddenly moved toward the pole. "Hey, guys, let's shake that old possum down out of his tree, hunh?"

Again the crowd laughed, and Ralph disappeared from his view under his platform. Suddenly the pole swayed violently. He was going to slide off the platform! The swaying stopped, and Ralph appeared in the street again, laughing with the

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## *The Pole*

laughing crowd and shaking hands with himself over his head.

He was gripping the edges of the platform, and his pulse was loud in his chest. It was a good twelve feet to the ground, dark and remote except in the circles made by the street lights.

The girl with Ralph was blonde and slim and high-breasted, dressed in black toreador pants and black turtle neck sweater. Now she clung to his shoulder, laughing up into his face. "Hey, Ralph! You didn't get that old possum down." She pressed her fingers into his arm, giggling shrilly.

Ralph tossed his head like a young stallion. He turned back toward the pole. There should be something to say to him, some meaningful thing to prevent this indignity. Arnold could not think what. There was to be a test, though it was hard to know what was to be tested, and he was not ready.

The pole swayed sharply again. He clung with his fingers, thighs, nails. Then he was sliding, out of control, out through the dark, through space, toward the light.

There was a sudden gasp, then hush from the crowd. He struck the grass of the parkway, rolling over on his shoulder, then lay there, waiting for the pain. From the porch came his mother's scream, rising to a shriek and quickly shuddering off to a groan.

The pain did not come. His shoulder began to ache a little, but it was nothing. He moved carefully, and the crowd sighed. He stood up. Mr. Fitch was beside him, peering into his face. The young man, Ralph, stood in the gutter, facing him, his hands up in front of his chest, his mouth twisted, fearful and defiant. He took a step toward Ralph, and Ralph's hands closed to fists.

"Arnold! Arnold!" His father puffed on to the sidewalk.

His mother came waddling behind him. "You bully!" she screamed at Ralph. "Arnold, precious!"

"I'm all right," he said.

Mr. Fitch approached Ralph. "Why don't you get out of here?"

Ralph scowled and stepped up to the curb, his hands still in fists. "Says who?"

## *The Massachusetts Review*

He had forgotten how noisy and crowded it was on the ground. They were milling about, all of them excited and unhappy. He walked back to the bushes and picked up the ladder.

Doug would feel he must even things with this Ralph person, but he could not bother. He was not hurt at all. And besides. . . Suddenly he stopped and looked about him—at the shuffling crowd, the angry or grinning faces, the lights shining on the roofs of cars. What had he started? There was a prickle across his scalp and down the back of his neck. He hurried to place the ladder.

His mother began to cry again, leaning on his father's shoulder and swaying back and forth. Someone in the crowd in a shouted whisper said, "He's going back up."

The stars were still there, white and cool against the orderly purple of the sky. The breeze touched him softly, and he felt like singing but could not think of an appropriate song. What a good world it was!

Ralph's girl was beside him on the curb where Mr. Fitch, his Legion cap askew, gestured at them.

"Who appointed you God?" the girl was screaming. "Shake him down again, Ralph! Don't let this old fuzz tell you what to do!"

"Get out of here!" Mr. Fitch yelled.

Ralph's lips were drawn back from his teeth, his brows lowered. His voice was breathy and hoarse. "He's just a goddam communist!"

"Shake him down, Ralph!"

"My Arnold's no communist, you bully!"

"Somebody get the cops!"

Mr. Fitch ran toward his own house, his long legs striding awkwardly. The crowd was laughing again. The pole seemed to sway right out from under him this time.

He was falling toward the driveway, and it would be harder than the grass parkway. He put out his left hand to catch himself. He heard his arm break before he felt it. Then he was on the ground, and a sledge hammer struck his left arm, just above his wrist, and pain flooded and flooded and flooded.

## *The Pole*

He thought it was he who was screaming till he heard the words, "Arnold, precious! Arnold, precious!" He just lay and let the pain flood over him. Then it began to ebb and return in waves. At last it ebbed more than it returned.

He sat up, cradling the broken arm with his other hand. Mr. Fitch was running back across the street with the other two men in Legion hats. Ralph's two friends, who had been leaning against the car watching, now stood and moved beside him and the girl. His father was holding his mother by the arm while she cried and swung soft, gentle arcs with her right hand in the direction of Ralph.

Ralph was slightly crouched, feet apart, shoulders hunched, facing the three men running toward him.

"That's all! No more!" Mr. Fitch panted.

Ralph licked his lips and darted quick glances all around him. "Says who?"

Ralph was afraid and unhurt. He was hurt but unafraid now. He would rather be he than Ralph. He got up and went back to the ladder. Despite the pain he was able to wrestle it into place with his one good arm. There was so much commotion that no one paid any attention to him.

Mr. Fitch shook his finger in Ralph's face. "You're just a hoodlum! He's not hurting you!"

Ralph spat at Mr. Fitch's feet. "I don't like him. He's a communist."

The girl danced in and out between them. "He's a yellow-belly! Yellow-belly!"

Mr. Fitch held up his hand like a traffic policeman. "No more violence. He has his rights. This is a free country."

He had difficulty getting on to the platform, but he made it. Warned by the rising buzz of the crowd, Ralph suddenly turned and saw him.

"Damn you!" he bellowed. He stood staring up at him, fists clenched in front of him. "God damn you!" Then he flung himself at the pole.

He fell relaxed this time, the broken arm cradled in his other hand, but lights exploded in his head, and pain flooded out from his arm, and he passed out, slowly and gratefully.

## *The Massachusetts Review*

When he awoke, his father was kneeling beside him, and all the noises were much louder than before. His father's face kept turning bright red, then fading gray, then turning bright red, and at last he realized there was a police car in the street, its red roof light rotating. His father touched his forehead with his handkerchief, and the touch burned, and the handkerchief was wet and brown when he took it away.

There were many voices, all shouting and talking at once, but he recognized his mother's tear-stained, "Arnold, precious," and Mr. Fitch's firm, "I warned them, Officer. I said, 'This is still free America where a man has rights.' . . . No, he never said a word to them. Hoodlums!"

In the glare of lights, his pole leaned crazily, but the signs were still in place. He sat up slowly, his father helping him, clucking at him and lifting him. He looked again at the pole, its platform still solidly in place, held by the screws his father had driven.

His head hurt now as much as his arm, but he struggled to his feet.

His father supported him till he was upright, then stepped back. He was less stooped, and his face was no longer gray. He, too, looked up toward the platform. "Shall I get the ladder, Arnold?"

He flung his good arm around his father's shoulders and hugged him tightly, all the while watching the red light from the police car flick angrily on and off the platform of his pole. Blood trickled warmly down his cheek, but the pain was not much now.

Mr. Fitch's important voice called, "The injured boy is over here, Doctor."

His father stirred and spoke in a choked voice. "I'll get it, Arnold."

He looked again toward the platform, then held up his good hand. "Wait, Dad."

His father turned.

He shook his head, then smiled. "I guess I'm not called to go up there now—not any more," he said.



# THE CRICKET

FREDERICK GODDARD TUCKERMAN



*Muffled and lost in bottom grass*

MR



## Frederick Goddard Tuckerman's "The Cricket": an Introductory Note

*The republishing of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman's virtually unknown masterpiece, "The Cricket," is a service to lovers of poetry and students of American literature. A lifelong resident of Massachusetts, Tuckerman made only a slight literary impression during his lifetime (1821-1873). In 1931 Witter Bynner edited The Sonnets of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, following which Tuckerman gained a certain brief attention. In 1950 "The Cricket" was first discovered, and was issued in 290 impressions—its first printing—by the Cummingtton Press. It received only one review, by Yvor Winters in The Hudson Review (Autumn, 1950), but despite Mr. Winters' opinion that it is "probably the greatest single American poem of the nineteenth century," it apparently attracted few readers and secured no place in our literary history.*

*At first glance "The Cricket" may appear to be quaintly archaic, artificial, and obscure, but it is none of these things. In a superbly concrete language which captures a real but symbolic creature and landscape, and the emotions they radiate for him, Tuckerman reveals through a symphonic or fugue-like structure, with delicate variations of theme and tone, his struggle with the appeal of death as an end to life's frustrations, and his rejection of that appeal. The tensions created by this struggle reveal the radiance as well as the darkness which death casts on life, and through a sensuous, intellectual, and emotional dialectic the poem yields an experience which deepens with each reading. "The Cricket" has its flaws—a perhaps too slow initial movement, an occasional flatness or triteness of language, some syntactical confusion—but what at first seem inadequacies may on closer familiarity appear appropriate touches. Readers interested in a somewhat different interpretation should see Mr. Winters' review, and those who wish to read more by and about Tuckerman should see Mr. Bynner's edition of the sonnets.*

*The present printing, taken literally from the draft penciled in Tuckerman's notebook, includes corrections of errata cited in the Cummingtton Press edition.*

Mordecai Marcus

## The Cricket

The humming bee purrs softly o'er his flower,  
    From lawn and thicket  
The dogday locust singeth in the sun,  
    From hour to hour;  
Each has his bard, and thou, ere day be done  
    Shalt have no wrong;  
So bright that murmur mid the insect crowd  
Muffled and lost in bottom grass, or loud  
    By pale and picket:  
Shall I not take to help me in my song  
    A little cooing cricket?

## II

The afternoon is sleepy!, let us lie  
Beneath these branches, whilst the burdened brook  
Muttering and moaning to himself goes by,  
And mark our minstrel's carol, whilst we look  
Toward the faint horizon, swooning-blue.  
    Or in a garden bower  
Trellised and trammelled with deep drapery  
    Of hanging green;  
    Light glimmering through:—  
    There let the dull hop be  
Let bloom, with poppy's dark refreshing flower;  
Let the dead fragrance round our temples beat,  
Stunning the sense to slumber; whilst between  
The falling water and fluttering wind  
    Mingle and meet  
    Murmur and mix,

No few faint pipings from the glades behind,  
Or alder-thicks;  
But louder as the day declines,  
From tingling tassel blade and sheath,  
Rising from nets of river-vines  
Winrows and ricks,  
Above, beneath,  
At every breath:—  
At hand, around, illimitably  
Rising and falling like the sea,  
Acres of cricks!

### III

Dear to the child who hears thy rustling voice  
Cease at his footstep, though he hears thee still,  
Cease and resume, with vibrance crisp and shrill,  
Thou sittest in the sunshine to rejoice!  
Night lover too; bringer of all things dark,  
And rest and silence; yet thou bringest to me  
Always that burthen of the unresting sea  
The moaning cliffs, the low rocks blackly stark;  
These upland inland fields no more I view,  
But the long flat seaside beach, the wild seamew,  
And the overturning wave!  
Thou bringest too, dim accents from the grave  
To him who walketh when the day is dim,  
Dreaming of those who dream no more of him—  
With edg'd remembrances of joy and pain:  
And heyday looks and laughter come again;  
Forms that in happy sunshine lie and leap,  
With faces where but now a gap must be  
Renunciations, and partitions deep,  
And perfect tears, and crowning vacancy!  
And to thy poet at the twilights hush  
No chirping touch of lips with tittering blush,  
But wringing arms, hearts wild with love and wo  
Closed eyes, and kisses that would not let go.

#### IV

So wert thou loved in that old graceful time  
    When Greece was fair,  
While god and hero hearkened to thy chime  
    Softly astir  
Where the long grasses fringed Caÿster's lip—  
Long-drawn, with shimmering sails of swan and ship  
    And ship and swan—  
    Or where  
    Reedy Eurotas ran.  
Did that low warble teach they tender flute,  
    Xenaphyle?  
Its breathings mild? say! did the grasshopper  
Sit golden in thy purple hair  
    O Psammathe?  
Or wert thou mute  
Grieving for Pan amid the alders there?  
And by the water and along the hill  
That thirsty tinkle in the herbage still,  
Though the lost forest wailed to horns of Arcady?

#### V

Like the Enchanter old—  
Who sought mid the dead water's weeds and scum  
For evil growths beneath the moonbeam cold,  
    Or mandrake, or dorcynium;  
And touched the leaf that opened both his ears  
So that articulate voices now he hears  
In cry of beast or bird or insect's hum—  
Might I but find thy knowledge in thy song!  
    That twittering tongue  
Ancient as light, returning like the years.  
    So might I be  
Unwise to sing, thy true interpreter  
Thro denser stillness and in sounder dark  
Than ere thy notes have pierced to harrow me,  
    So might I stir

The world to hark  
To thee my lord and lawgiver  
And cease my quest,  
Content to bring thy wisdom to the world  
Content to gain at last some low applause  
Now low, now lost  
Like thine from mossy stone amid the stems and straws  
Or garden-grave mound tricked and drest—  
Powdered and pearled  
By stealing frost—  
In dusky rainbow-beauty of euphorbias!  
For larger would be less indeed, and like  
The ceaseless simmer in the summer grass  
To him who toileth in the windy field,  
Or where the sunbeams strike  
Naught in innumerable numerousness.  
So might I much possess  
So much must yield.  
But failing this, the dell and grassy dike  
The water and the waste shall still be dear  
And all the pleasant plots and places  
Where thou hast sung and I have hung  
To ignorantly hear.—  
Then cricket sing thy song, or answer mine  
Thine whispers blame, but mine has naught but praises  
It matters not.—Behold the autumn goes,  
The Shadow grows,  
The moments take hold of eternity;  
Even while we stop to wrangle or repine  
Our lives are gone  
Like thinnest mist,  
Like yon escaping colour in the tree:—  
Rejoice! rejoice! whilst yet the hours exist  
Rejoice or mourn, and let the world swing on  
Unmoved by Cricket-song of thee or me.

## *Stephen Sandy*

### ADVICE TO A FATHER FEELING HIS CAPITAL GAINS

Best to investigate the Taj Mahal  
where twenty years the Shah Jehan  
built up a tomb to house  
his wife Mumtaz.

Last lace of jeweled marble placed, the son  
now runs the country. Jehan, put up  
in a tower over the river  
daily observes,

over the fields, the white domes bloom in the sun.

Locked in that rural marble while his boy  
is playing the field, Jehan moans  
atonement for his untimely  
defiance of time,

the family grave. An exquisite pain. Below,  
in shade, the sun bleeding the hill,  
the footfall of the white ponies  
prancing toward Agra

lilts like a swallow into the brown sky.

Leo Marx

## Shakespeare's American Fable

If any man shall accuse these reports of partiall falshood, supposing them to be but Utopian, and legendarie fables, because he cannot conceive, that plentie and famine, a temperate climate, and distempered bodies, felicities, and miseries can be reconciled together, let him now reade with judgment, but let him not judge before he hath read.

*A True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie in Virginia.* . . . London, 1610.

SOME OF THE CONNECTIONS between *The Tempest* and America are well known. We know, for one thing, that Shakespeare wrote the play three or possibly four years after the first permanent colony had been established at Jamestown in 1607. At the time all of England was in a state of excitement about events across the Atlantic. But of course the play is not in any literal sense about America. Although Shakespeare is nowhere explicit about the location of the "uninhabited island," so far as he allows us to guess, it lies somewhere in the Mediterranean off the coast of Africa. For the dramatist's purpose it might be anywhere. Nevertheless, we are almost certain that Shakespeare had in mind the reports of a recent voyage to the new world. In 1609 the *Sea Adventure*, one of a fleet of ships headed for Virginia, was caught in a violent storm and separated from the rest. Eventually it ran aground in the Bermudas and all aboard got safely to shore. Several people wrote accounts of the episode, and unmistakable echoes of at least two of them may be heard in *The Tempest*—particularly in the storm scene and in the depiction of the island landscape. At one point, moreover, Ariel refers to having fetched dew from the



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"still vex'd Bermoothes." All of these facts, I repeat, are well known and reasonably well established. In themselves, however, they do not suggest a particularly significant relation between the play and America. They indicate only that Shakespeare, like any wide-awake Englishman of his day, was aware of what his countrymen were doing in the western hemisphere.

But when in addition to the external facts we consider Shakespeare's theme, a more illuminating connection between *The Tempest* and America comes into view. The play, after all, is about what happens to a highly civilized European when he finds himself living in a wilderness. Prospero's situation is in some ways the typical situation of voyagers in newly discovered lands. I am thinking of the remote setting, the strong sense of place and its hold on the mind, the hero's struggle with raw nature on the one hand and the corruption within his own civilization on the other, and, finally, his impulse to effect a general reconciliation between the forces of civilization and nature. Of course it may be said that the conflict between art and nature is a universal theme. Certainly it has been a special concern of writers working in the pastoral tradition from the time of Theocritus and Virgil. Besides, it has a long foreground in Shakespeare's own work—witness *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*. All of this is true enough. And yet it is also true that the theme is one of which American experience affords a singularly vivid instance: an unspoiled landscape suddenly invaded by advance parties of a dynamic, literate civilization. It would be difficult to invent a more dramatic confrontation of the natural and the artificial. From the beginning, therefore, variations of the pastoral motive have lent themselves to the interpretation of life in the new world. In fact, the theme is inherent in the contradictory images of the American landscape that we find in Elizabethan travel reports, including those which Shakespeare seems to have read before writing *The Tempest*.

### I

Most Elizabethan ideas of America were invested in images of landscape. This is hardly surprising; there was little else

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with which to form a visual impression of the virgin land. Besides, what most fascinated Englishmen was precisely the absence of anything like European society; here was a landscape untouched by history—nature unmixed with art. The new continent looked, or so they thought, the way the world might have been supposed to look before the beginning of civilization. Of course the Indians also contributed to the image. But their simple ways merely confirmed the identification of the new world with primal nature. They fitted perfectly into the picture of America as a landscape, remote and unspoiled, and a possible setting for a pastoral drama. However, this does not mean that Shakespeare's contemporaries agreed about the character or the promise of the new land. Europeans never had agreed about the nature of nature; nor did they now agree about America. The old conflict, the yes and no of man's deepest feelings about the physical universe, was imparted to descriptions of the terrain. Elizabethan travel reports embody sharply contrasting images of the American landscape.

At one extreme, among the more popular conceptions, we find the picture of America as paradise regained. According to a typical account of a voyage to Virginia in 1584, Captain Arthur Barlowe was not yet in sight of the coast when he got a vivid impression that a lovely Arcadian garden lay ahead. "We found shole water," he writes, "wher we smelt so sweet and so strong a smel, as if we had bene in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kinde of odoriferous flowers..." Barlowe, captain of a bark dispatched by Sir Walter Raleigh, goes on to describe Virginia in what was to become a cardinal image of America: an immense garden of "incredible abundance." The idea of America as a garden is the controlling metaphor of his entire report. He describes the place where the men first put ashore as

so full of grapes, as the very beating and surge of the Sea overflowed them, of which we found such plentie, as well there as in all places else, both on the sand and on the greene soile of the hils . . . that I thinke in all the world the like abundance is not to be found: and my selfe having

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scene those parts of Europe that most abound, find such difference as were incredible to be written.

Every detail reinforces the master image: Virginia is a land of plenty; the soil is "the most plentiful, sweete, fruitfull, and wholesome of all the worlde"; the virgin forest is not at all like the "barren and fruitless" woods of eastern Europe, but is full of the "highest and reddest Cedars in the worlde." One day Barlowe watches an Indian catching fish so rapidly that in half an hour he fills his canoe to the sinking point. Here Virginia stands not only for abundance, but for the general superiority of a simple, primitive style of life. Geography controls culture: the natives are "most gentle, loving and faithfull, void of all guile and treason, and such as live after the maner of the golden age."

Everyone is familiar with the picture of America as the site for a new golden age. The idea was a commonplace of Elizabethan travel literature, and there are many reasons for its popularity. For one thing, of course, the device made for effective propaganda in support of colonization. Projects like those of Raleigh required political backing, capital and colonists. Even in the sixteenth century the American countryside was the object of something like a cynical real estate promotion. Besides, fashionable tendencies in the arts helped to popularize the image of a new earthly paradise. During the Renaissance, when landscape painting emerged as a distinct genre, painters discovered—or rather, as Kenneth Clark puts it, rediscovered—the garden. The ancient image of an enchanted garden gave the first serious painters of landscape their most workable organizing motif. To think about landscape at all in this period, therefore, was to call forth a vision of benign and ordered nature. And a similar concern makes itself felt in Elizabethan literature. Since then pastoral poetry in English never has enjoyed such a vogue. The exploration of North America coincided with the publication of Spenser's Virgilian poem, *The Shepheards Calender* (1579) and Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590), to name only two of the more famous Elizabethan pastorals. It is difficult to separate the taste for pastoral and the excitement, felt throughout

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Europe, about the new world. The celebrated golden age passage in *Don Quixote*, first published in 1605, also comes to mind. About the same time Michael Drayton who, like Shakespeare, had close associations with members of the Virginia Company, published "To the Virginian Voyage," with its many obvious echoes of the travel reports. Drayton writes of "VIRGINIA, / Earth's only paradise," as a place where

... Nature hath in store  
Fowl, venison, and fish;  
And the fruitful'st soil,  
Without your toil,  
Three harvests more,  
All greater than your wish.  
...  
To whom the Golden Age  
Still Nature's laws doth give:  
Nor other cares attend  
But them to defend  
From winter's rage,  
That long there doth not live.

As in Captain Barlowe's report, the new land smells as sweet to the approaching voyager as the most fragrant garden:

When as the luscious smell  
Of that delicious land,  
Above the seas that flows,  
The clear wind throws,  
Your hearts to swell  
Approaching the dear strand.

The age of discovery was dazzled by thoughts of Eden regained, and it is hardly necessary to itemize the similarities between the "gentle, loving and faithfull" Indians of Virginia and the shepherd heroes of Virgilian pastoral. In Elizabethan literature the distinction between primitive and pastoral styles of life often is blurred, and devices first used by Theocritus and Virgil appear in many descriptions of the new continent.

But if the image of America as a garden was fashionable, it was no mere rhetorical commonplace. It expressed one of the

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deepest and most persistent of human motives. When Elizabethan voyagers described Virginia in this image they were drawing upon utopian aspirations that Europeans always had cherished, and that had given rise, long before the discovery of America, to a whole series of idealized, imaginary worlds. Besides the Golden Age and Arcadia, we are reminded of Elysium, Atlantis, the enchanted gardens, Eden and Tirnanogue and the fragrant bower where the Hesperides stood watch over the golden apples. Centuries of longing and revery had been invested in the conception. What is more, the association of America with idyllic places was destined to outlive Elizabethan fashions by at least two and a half centuries. It was not until late in the nineteenth century that this way of thinking about the new world lost its grip upon the imagination of Europe and America. As for the ancillary notion of the new continent as a land of plenty, that, as we all know, today is stronger than ever. Historians now stress what the sixteenth-century voyager called "incredible abundance" as perhaps the most important single distinguishing characteristic of American life. In our time, to be sure, the idea has been detached from the image of the garden and linked to the image of the machine, but the idea of America as a uniquely prosperous land persists.

However, Elizabethan travelers did not always fancy that they were seeing Arcadia when they gazed at the coast of North America. Given a less inviting terrain, a bad voyage, a violent storm, hostile Indians or, most important, different presuppositions about the universe, America might be made to seem the very opposite of a bountiful garden. Travelers then resorted to another conventional metaphôr of landscape depiction. In 1609, for example, when William Strachey's vessel reached the new world, it was caught—as he puts it—in "a dreadfull storme and hideous . . . which swelling, and roaring as it were by fits . . . at length did beate all light from heaven; which like an hell of darknesse turned black upon us. . . ." After the ship was beached, Strachey and his company realized that they were on one of the "dangerous and dreaded . . . Ilands of the Bermuda." His report is one that Shakespeare almost certainly was

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thinking about when he wrote *The Tempest*—a point to which I shall return. Here we need only notice the implications of the “hideous wilderness” image of the new world landscape. The new world, in this conception, is a place of hellish darkness; it arouses fear of malevolent forces in the cosmos, and of the bestial traits of man. It is associated with the wild men of medieval legend. No doubt the most celebrated use of this image appears in William Bradford’s account of an event that occurred shortly after the Bermuda wreck.

When the *Mayflower* stood off Cape Cod in September, 1620, Bradford looked across the water at what seemed to him a “hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men.” Between the pilgrims and their new home, he saw only “deangerous shoulds and roaring breakers.” So far from seeming an earthly paradise, the landscape struck Bradford as menacing and repellent.

Nether could they, as it were, goe up to the tope of Pisgah, to vew from this willdernes a more goodly cuntry to feed their hops; for which way soever they turnd their eys (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respecte of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a wether-beaten face; and the whole cuntry, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage heiw. If they looked behind them, ther was the mighty ocean which they had passed, and was now as a maine barr and goulfe to seperate them from all the civill parts of the world.

This grim sight provoked one of the first of what has proved to be an interminable series of melancholy inventories of the desirable—not to say indispensable—items of civilization absent from the raw continent. His people, said Bradford, had “no friends to wellcome them, nor inns to entertaine or refresh their weatherbeaten bodys, no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seeke for succoure.” Instead of abundance and joy, Bradford saw only deprivation and suffering in the face of American nature.

Here, then, is a model of the American landscape that is radically opposed to the garden. Each of these images is tradi-

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tionally associated with quite different ideas of man's essential relation to his environment. We might call them ecological images. Each is a kind of root metaphor, a poetic idea revealing the highly compressed essence of a system of value. Ralph Waldo Emerson had some such concept in mind when he observed, in *English Traits*, that the views of nature held by any people seem to "determine all their institutions." To put the matter in other words, each image embodies a quite distinct notion of America's destiny—a distinct social ideal. On the spectrum of Elizabethan ideas of America the hideous wilderness appears at one end and the garden at the other.

To depict the new land as a lovely garden is to celebrate an ideal of immediate, joyous fulfillment. It should be admitted, however, that the word "immediate" conceals a crucial ambiguity. *How* immediate? we may well ask. At times the garden image is used to represent the sufficiency of nature in its original state. Then it conveys an impulse-centered, anarchic or primitivistic\* view of life. But elsewhere the image stands for a state of cultivation, hence a less extreme estimate of nature's spontaneous beneficence. Although the line between the two is not sharp, it is crucial, as we shall see. Here it is enough to remark

\* "...the roots of cultural primitivism are . . . various and even incongruous. Common to them all, indeed, is the conviction that the time—whatever time may, for a given writer, be in question—is out of joint; that what is wrong with it is due to an abnormal complexity and sophistication in the life of civilized man, to the pathological multiplicity and emulativeness of his desires and the oppressive over-abundance of his belongings, and to the factiousness and want of inner spontaneity of his emotions; that 'art,' the work of man, has corrupted 'nature,' that is, man's own nature; and that the model of the normal individual life and the normal social order, or at least a nearer approximation to it, is to be found among contemporary 'savage' peoples, whether or not it be supposed to have been realized also in the life of primeval man. Civilized man has been almost continuously subject to moods of revolt against civilization, which in some sense is, indeed, profoundly contrary to his nature; and in the serious preachers of primitivism this revolt has been chronic and intense. But the belief in the superiority of the simple life of 'nature' has been the manifestation sometimes of a hedonistic, sometimes of a rigoristic and even ascetic, conception of the nature of the good, and sometimes a mixture of both." (Arthur O. Lovejoy, foreword to Lois Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century* [Baltimore, 1934], xiv-xv.)



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that both images of the garden—the wild and the cultivated— invariably embody something of that timeless impulse to cut loose from the constraints of a complex society. In Elizabethan travel literature the image usually suggests some revulsion, quickened no doubt by the discovery of new lands, at the deprivations that had for so long been accepted as an unavoidable basis for civilization. To depict America as a garden is to express aspirations the world still considers utopian— aspirations, that is, toward abundance, leisure, freedom, and a greater harmony of existence.

But to describe America as a hideous wilderness or howling desert is to envisage another field for the exercise of power. These violent images usually are invoked when the need is felt to mobilize all energy, postpone immediate pleasures, and constantly rehearse the perils and purposes of the community. Life in a garden is relaxed, quiet and sweet, like the life of Virgil's shepherds, but survival in a howling desert demands action, the unceasing manipulation and mastery of the forces of nature, including, of course, human nature. Colonies established in a desert require aggressive, intellectual, and well-disciplined people. It is hardly surprising that the New England Puritans favored the "hideous wilderness" as a picture of the American landscape.

What is most revealing about these opposed images of landscape, needless to say, is not their relative accuracy in depicting the actual topography. America was neither Eden nor a howling desert. These are poetic metaphors, imaginative constructions which heighten meaning far beyond the limits of fact. And yet, like all effective metaphors, each had a basis in fact. America was *both* Eden and a howling desert; the actual conditions of life in the new world lent plausibility to both images. The infinite resources of the virgin land really did make credible, in minds long habituated to the notion of unavoidable scarcity, the ancient dream of an abundant and harmonious life for all. Yet at the same time the savages, the limitless spaces and the violent climate of the country did threaten to engulf the new outposts of civilization. There was ample evidence to support

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either view, and during the age of Elizabeth many Englishmen seized upon one or the other as representing the truth about America and her prospects.

But there were others who recognized the contradiction and attempted to understand or at least to express it. One of them was Sylvester Jourdain, who wrote a report on the Bermuda wreck of 1609. He observes that the islands were widely considered "a most prodigious and enchanted place affording nothing but gusts, storms, and foule weather; which made every Navigator and Mariner to avoide them . . . as they would shunne the Devill himselfe. . . ." It was all the more surprising, therefore, when the castaways discovered that the climate was "so temperate and the Country so abundantly fruitful of all fit necessities" that they were able to live in comfort for nine months. Experience soon led them to reconsider the legendary horror of the place. Jourdain, one of the writers whose report Shakespeare apparently had read, finally puts it this way: "whereas it [Bermuda] hath been, and is still accounted, the most dangerous and infortunate, and most forlorne place of the world, it is in truth the richest and healthfullest and pleasing land (the quantity and bignisse thereof considered) and meere naturall, as ever man set foot upon."

William Strachey, in his report, also points to the ambiguity of nature in the new world. As already mentioned, he had been impressed by the legendary hideousness of the islands:

... they be so terrible to all that ever touched on them, and such tempests, thunders and other fearfull objects are seene and heard about them, that they be called commonly, the Devils Ilands, and are feared and avoyded of all sea travellers alive, above any other place in the world.

Then in the very next sentence Strachey acknowledges the contrary evidence: "Yet it pleased our mercifull God to make even this hideous and hated place both the place of our safetie, and meanes of our deliverance." By invoking providence he can admit the attractions of the islands without having to reject the received opinion of Bermuda as a hideous wilderness.

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There were a number of devices for coping with these contradictory ideas about America. One writer, anxious to correct the dismal reports about life at Jamestown during the early years, attacks the problem head-on. He begins with a stock and no doubt transparently propagandistic celebration of Virginia's abundance, but, aware at the same time that the actual calamities were well known, he interjects the direct appeal to the reader's credulity cited at the head of this essay. For him the problem is to persuade readers to accept an image of America in which "felicities and miseries can be reconciled together. . . ."

But if some Elizabethan travelers discovered that the stock images of America embraced a contradiction, few had the wit to see what mysteries it veiled. Few recognized that a most striking moral fact about the new world was its baffling hospitality to radically opposed interpretations. If America seemed to promise everything that men always had wanted, it also threatened to obliterate much of what they already had achieved. The paradox was to be a cardinal subject of our national literature, and beginning in the nineteenth century our best imaginative writers were able to develop the theme in all its complexity. Not that the conflict was in any sense peculiar to American experience. It had always been at the heart of pastoral, but the massive actuality of a new world invested it with new relevance—with new meaning. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the play that Shakespeare wrote in the hour that colonization began.

### II

- Adrian.* Though this island seem to be desert,—  
*Sebastian.* Ha, ha, ha! . . .  
*Adrian.* Uninhabitable and almost inaccessible,—  
*Sebastian.* Yet,—  
*Adrian.* Yet,—  
*Antonio.* He could not miss't.  
*Adrian.* It must needs be of subtle, tender, and delicate temperance.  
*Antonio.* Temperance was a delicate wench.  
*Sebastian.* Ay, and a subtle; as he most learnedly delivered.  
*Adrian.* The air breathes upon us here most sweetly.

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- Sebastian. As if it had lungs and rotten ones.  
Antonio. Or as 't were perfumed by a fen.  
Gonzalo. Here is everything advantageous to life.  
Antonio. True; save means to live.  
Sebastian. Of that there's none, or little.  
Gonzalo. How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!

This exchange takes place when the court party first examines the island after the wreck; it is a comic version of the effort to reconcile conflicting images of the new world. But for all the jesting a genuine sense of the terrain—its palpable presence—comes through. The actuality of the landscape, hence the close juxtaposition of fact and fancy, is indeed a distinguishing mark of pastoral set in the new world. To be sure, a remote, lush and unspoiled landscape had always been a feature of the mode; it made plausible the movement away from everyday life that is an emotional mainspring of pastoral. But the typical setting of pastoral had been a never-never land. The poet did not pretend that it was an actual place, and the reader was not expected to take it as one. (In Europe, for one thing, it was difficult to credit the existence of an ideal site that was unoccupied.) In the age of discovery, however, a note of realism gets into pastoral. Writers are increasingly tempted to set the action in a terrain that resembles, if not a real place, then the wish-colored image of a real place. Even when the connection is not made explicit, as in *The Tempest*, we surely feel the imaginative impact of an actual new world.

This sense of discovery accounts for the close affinity between the travel literature and Elizabethan pastoral. Many voyagers find pastoral conventions useful in writing their reports. What gives them a special stamp, indeed, is the joining together of the conventional and the novel; artificial devices of rhetoric are used to report fresh, striking, geographical facts. The combination heightens our sense of awe in the presence of a virgin continent. For example, we may recognize Virgil's shepherds in those Indians of Barlowe's who are gentle and loving after the manner of the golden age. But the fact remains that the place

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is Virginia. Virginia does exist. Can it be, then, that the old, old dream suddenly has come true? The question, even when unexpressed, makes itself felt in much of the early writing about America, and it lends fresh conviction and immediacy to the pastoral impulse. We feel it in Gonzalo's exclamation: "How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!" The greenness of grass is hardly a novel idea; green had been the dominant color of the landscape in Virgil's eclogues as it was to be in *Leaves of Grass*. But somehow the conventionality of the idea helps to make the line convincing. The effect comes from the strength of feeling that Shakespeare's character attaches to so homely a fact. Could anything but green grass, actually before his eyes, produce so lyrical a banality? "The singing of the little birds," Christopher Columbus had written in 1492 of a West Indian island, "is such that it seems that one would never desire to depart hence."

But what kind of place is Shakespeare's "uninhabited island"? Like Arcadia or Virginia, it is remote and unspoiled, and at first thought we are likely to remember it as a kind of natural paradise. The play leaves us with a memory of an enchanted isle where life is easy and the scenery a delight. Or if this is not the whole truth (after all, what about Caliban?), it surely is clear that the island is the sort that can be expected to arouse utopian fantasies in the minds of Europeans. Had not the voyages of Columbus and Cabot inspired Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1516? As soon as the storm is over and the castaways reassemble on the beach we hear the discussion quoted above. It is Gonzalo, the "honest old Councillor," who is most responsive to the promise of the green island. Soon he is half-seriously ruminating about the kingdom he would set up if he had "plantation of this isle."

Gonzalo. I' th' commonwealth I would by contraries  
Execute all things; for no kind of traffic  
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;  
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,  
And use of service, none; contract, succession,  
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;

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No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;  
No occupation; all men idle, all;  
And women too, but innocent and pure;  
No sovereignty;—

*Sebastian.*

Yet he would be king on 't.

*Antonio.* The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning.

*Gonzalo.* All things in common nature should produce

Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,

Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,

Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,

Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,

To feed my innocent people.

How seriously shall we take the old man's vision of the island's possibilities? Most scholars say that Shakespeare merely is mocking the whole idea. We know that he borrowed it, and indeed some of the actual words, from Montaigne's essay on cannibals—one of the fountainheads of modern primitivism. We also know that the speech belongs to a tradition that goes back to the ancient Greek idea of man's original state. Gonzalo admits as much a moment later: "I would with such perfection, govern, sir, / T' excel the Golden Age." But it is one thing to identify Shakespeare's source and quite another to know what to make of this celebrated passage. We sense immediately that the world of Gonzalo's imagination, for all his "merry fooling," is in many ways similar to the "real" world of the play, the enchanted island that Prospero rules. Yet it is impossible to miss the skepticism which Shakespeare places, like a frame, around the old man's speech. We feel it in the force that he lends to the interruptions of the insolent courtiers, Sebastian and Antonio. These two are nothing if not cunning, and they quickly and shrewdly detect the veiled egoism in Gonzalo's conception of society. Antonio puts it with impressive economy: "The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning." In one line Shakespeare condenses a treatise on the fallacy that nullifies most primitivist programs. The scornful worldling sees that Gonzalo is befuddled about the uses of power, and that he proposes to exercise absolute power in order to set up a polity

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notable chiefly for the absence of power. Gonzalo means to imply, of course, that here nature is so benign that power is not necessary. Hence he would begin his imaginary regime by dispensing with government, literacy, technology—even agricultural technology. He is dreaming of what a nineteenth-century utopian might call the “disappearance of the state.” To see how far Shakespeare is from sharing these sentiments, we have only to compare the “beginning” of Gonzalo’s utopia with the “beginning” of Prospero’s actual island “commonwealth.”

We get our first impression of the setting for Prospero’s regime from the violent storm with which *The Tempest* begins. In the opening scene Shakespeare creates a kind of tempestuous no man’s land between civilization and this other, new world. Later, it is true, we learn that the storm had been contrived by Prospero himself, but then we also recognize that he is forcing his old enemies to re-enact his own passage from civilization into nature. When, twelve years before, he and Miranda also had survived a tempest in a “rotten carcass of a butt,” they had been at the mercy of the elements. Nor does Prospero ever forget that the elements were merciless. His enemies, he tells Miranda, launched them upon the water:

To cry to th’ sea that roar’d to us, to sigh  
To the winds whose pity, sighing back again,  
Did us but loving wrong.

Like the castaways in William Strachey’s report of the Bermuda wreck, Prospero and Miranda were saved only by “Providence divine.”

The opening scene dramatizes the precariousness of civilization when exposed to the full fury of nature. In seventy spare lines we are given what Strachey, describing the Bermuda tempest, calls a “dreadful storme and hideous . . . swelling, and roaring as it were by fits. . . .” Against a background of thunder and lightning an egg-shell ship founders on a furious ocean. “We split, we split! Farewell, my wife and children!” Disorder in society follows close upon disorder in nature. In the emergency the lowly boatswain, who gives orders to noble courtiers, justi-



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fies his disregard of social degree by pointing to nature itself: "What cares these roarers for the name of king?" So far as he is concerned, what counts in the crisis is seamanship, technical skill, the ability to resist and repress primal forces. But Gonzalo, who even then fails to appreciate the need for power, thinks the seaman impudent: "... remember," he warns him, "whom thou hast aboard." Whereupon the boatswain, emboldened by danger, invites the nobleman to prove his authority over the tempest—"command these elements"—or, in effect, keep still.

Shakespeare leaves no doubt about the difference between the original state of nature as Gonzalo imagines it and as it actually exists in the world of *The Tempest*. The audience at the play enters this world through a howling storm, and so experiences something of what Prospero and Miranda had found when they arrived on the island. We may forget that the place then was under the sway of evil forces. Its ruler was Caliban's mother, the malevolent "blue-ey'd hag," Sycorax, and twelve years later Caliban still thinks of the island as his rightful possession. "This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,/ Which thou tak'st from me." Before she died the "damn'd witch" had imprisoned Ariel in a cloven pine, and to win his co-operation Prospero reminds Ariel what the place had once been like:

Then was this island—

Save for the son that she did litter here,

A freckl'd whelp, hag-born,—not honour'd with

A human shape.

In its "original" state, that is before Prospero's arrival, this new world had been a howling desert, where the profane ruled. In the first scene Shakespeare uses every possible device to stress the violent, menacing power of nature. Above all, he makes the storm scene a scene apart. The rest of the action is colored by fantasy, but the storm is depicted in spare naturalistic tones. We are invited to imagine a real ship in a real tempest. The contrast between this scene and the rest of the play is underscored by the absence of Prospero. This is the only time

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when we are unaware of the controlling power of his magic. As soon as the scene is over we learn of his art, and from then on nothing is "natural," all is touched by enchantment. The rest of the action, until Prospero announces in the last act that the "charm dissolves apace," is a kind of dream. What is more, the dramatic structure of *The Tempest* sets this scene off from the rest. Critics frequently note how close Shakespeare comes to observing the classical unities in the play—how (except for the storm scene) all the action takes place on the island, and how (except for the storm scene) it is all neatly packed into four hours. But in unifying the rest of the play Shakespeare isolates and thereby accentuates the force of the storm itself. It lends its name to the entire action. How much simpler the stagecraft would have been had the play begun with a scene on the beach after the wreck (the facts about the storm might easily have been conveyed by dialogue), but how much imaginative force would have been lost! To carry its dramatic weight within the fable the storm must be dramatized. In that way Shakespeare projects an image of menacing nature, and of the turmoil that Prospero had survived, into dramatic time. The opening scene represents the furies, without and within, that civilized man must endure to gain a change of heart. As an ironic underpinning for Gonzalo's sentimental idea of nature, nothing could be more effective than the howling storm.

Nor is the menacing character of nature confined to the opening episode. Within the encircling storm, to be sure, there is a lush, green island; but in depicting it Shakespeare does not allow us to forget the hideous wild. All through the first of the comic episodes, when Trinculo and Stephano meet Caliban, we hear thunder rolling in the distance. "Alas, the storm is come again!" says Trinculo as he crawls under the monster's gabardine. If we sometimes lose sight of unruly nature during the play, it is largely because Prospero's art had done much of its work by the time the action begins. In twelve years he has changed the island from a howling desert into what seems an idyllic land of ease, peace and plenty. He has liberated Ariel and enslaved Caliban. With his magic he has eliminated or

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controlled many unpleasant, ugly features of primal nature. And yet enough remain to dispel the primitivistic daydream that Gonzalo speaks.

Apart from the initial storm, the most vivid reminder of the island's past is Caliban. It is from Caliban that Prospero learns a most valuable lesson about unspoiled nature. At first his feelings about primitive man, like Gonzalo's, had been those of the more optimistic Elizabethan voyagers. He had responded to Caliban as Gonzalo responds to the "Shapes" that Prospero conjures up:

If in Naples

I should report this now, would they believe me?  
If I should say, I saw such islanders—  
For, certes, these are people of the island—  
Who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet, note,  
Their manners are more gentle-kind, than of  
Our human generation you shall find  
Many, nay, almost any.

At first, I say, Prospero had thought it possible to nurture and redeem Caliban:

I have us'd thee,

Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodg'd thee  
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate  
The honour of my child.

Like her father, Miranda also had pitied Caliban before the abortive attack. She had taught him human speech, but now she refers to him as: "Abhorred slave,/Which any print of goodness wilt not take,/Being capable of all ill!" It is true that Prospero has Caliban in his power when the action begins, but the creature's threatening presence reminds us throughout that the dark, hostile forces exhibited by the storm are still active. We are not in Eden; Caliban must be made to work. He keeps us in mind of the unremitting vigilance and the repression of instinct necessary to the felicity Prospero and Miranda enjoy.

But finally it is Prospero himself who most clearly defines the nature of nature, and man's relation to it, in the prehistoric setting of *The Tempest*. Before his exile he had led an almost

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exclusively passive and contemplative life, "rapt in secret studies." If there is still something of the medieval hermit about Prospero as we see him, he now recognizes what was wrong with his earlier life. By "neglecting worldly ends," in fact, he had helped the conspiracy that took his throne. Since then he has been forced to exercise as well as study power. His survival and his triumph rest upon art, a white magic akin to science and technology. As any reader of *The Golden Bough* or the work of Malinowski knows, there are close affinities between magic and modern science, particularly in their tacit views of man's necessary posture in the face of physical nature. Both presuppose our ability and indeed our inescapable need to master the non-human through activity of mind. The aim of Prospero's magic, as his relations with Ariel and Caliban show, is to keep the elements of air, earth, fire and water at work in the service of his island community. He does not share Gonzalo's faith in what "Nature should produce/Without sweat or endeavour."

The difference between the two approaches to nature also is the difference between two ways of conceiving history. Like all primitivist programs, Gonzalo's plantation speech in effect repudiates calculated human effort, the trained intellect and, for that matter, the record of civilization itself. It denies the value of history. It says that man was happiest in the beginning—in the golden age—and that the record of human activity is therefore a record of decline. But Prospero's personal history exemplifies an opposed view. At first, after his banishment, the elements controlled his fate, but gradually, by use of reason and art, he has won dominion over nature. As his name suggests, he is a kind of meliorist. (The names of most of the characters in *The Tempest* have overtones of symbolic significance. Caliban, for example, is formed from the letters of "cannibal.") Prospero is derived from the Latin, *prosperare*, to cause to succeed. Although a reclusive scholar in Europe, here in this brave new world Prospero is more like a social engineer. Given the setting, it may not be too far-fetched to see his behavior as prophetic of the deliberate and sometimes utopian manipulation of social

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forms that would tempt Europeans in a virgin land. His sense of the plastic character of human behavior is largely unstated, but it is made graphic by his impressive rôle as "designer" of the drama itself. It is he, after all, who stands above the level of ordinary mortals and contrives the ritual of initiation that finally achieves a change of state.

As the shaping spirit of the play, Prospero directs the movement toward redemption not by renouncing power, but by exercising it to the full. His control is based upon hard work, study and scholarly self-discipline. We are constantly reminded of his studious habits, and even Caliban recognizes that his power stems from the written word. "Remember/," he warns his fellow conspirators, "First to possess his books; for without them/He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not/One spirit to command. . . ." Until the final scene we are kept mindful of Prospero's nagging responsibility, and his devotion to the reasoned use of power. What he feels toward the external forces of nature, moreover, has its counterpart in what he feels about passion, his own included. When Ariel reports the anguish of enemies, for example, Prospero has to master his vengeful impulse:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,  
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part. . . .

As man must control the animals, so must his intellect dominate the passions. Though Prospero is a model of self-mastery, taut, humorless, and awesome, he does not neglect the emotional and sensual in people. This humane balance appears in his self-effacing and magnanimous encouragement of Miranda's suitor. At the same time it is characteristic of him that he insists upon a controlled and chaste engagement. As John Berryman has remarked, Prospero fulfills Hamlet's ideal—the man who is not passion's slave.

What I am saying is that Prospero's experience is in effect a denial of the idea, expressed by Gonzalo, that we should emulate the spontaneous, uncalculated ways of mindless nature. In

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the beginning, according to the skeletal fable of *The Tempest*, there was more of chaos than of order—a fearful storm, not a delightful garden. To reach the island, an uninhabited stage for a new beginning, the European had risked annihilation in a hideous wilderness. Prospero's success, finally, is the result not of submission to nature, but of action—of change that stems from his book. On this island power makes love possible, hence both may be said to rest upon the book of magical lore—that is, upon the coupling of mind and object exemplified by art. In Prospero's triumph Shakespeare affirms an intellectual and humanistic ideal of high civilization.

### III

But having said all this, we still must cope with what now may seem a paradox: our initial impression that in *The Tempest* Shakespeare glorifies nature, the island landscape and the rusticity of Prospero's little community. To conclude that Prospero's triumph is a triumph of art over nature does not square with our full experience of the play. We cannot forget that here redemption is made possible by a journey away from Europe into the wilderness. In Milan the hero's art was anything but triumphant; on the island it helps to create a kind of natural paradise. Here is a life of unexampled bounty, serenity, freedom and delight. It is an idealized rural style of life, in striking contrast to what we may infer about life back in Milan. The simple comforts, the dreamlike remoteness from the stress of the great world, the lyrical immersion in the immediate sensations of nature—we identify all of these boons with the unspoiled landscape. Above all, we think of the setting as conducive to a sensuous intimacy between man and not-man that nourishes the spirit as well as the body. But how then are we to reconcile the triumph of Prospero's intellectual ideal with a celebration of the movement *away* from advanced society towards nature?

Some critics, to be sure, deny that *The Tempest* embraces a positive view of physical nature or, to be more concrete, of the

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island setting. But perhaps that is because Shakespeare, like many writers working in the pastoral tradition, relies upon auditory images to carry his strongest affirmation of man's rootedness in nature. The visible landscape is relatively insignificant in *The Tempest*, but to conclude that the characters are unaffected by the setting is to ignore what Shakespeare does with music. The uninhabited island is a land of musical enchantment, and from beginning to end all kinds of engaging sounds play upon our ears. We hear music being sung and played and talked about, and then of course we hear the music of the poetry itself. That is obvious enough. What may be less obvious, however, is that here music serves, among other things, as the audible expression of external nature's influence upon mind. After the wreck, the first survivor we meet is Ferdinand, who is following sounds that seem to flow from the very terrain itself:

Where should this music be? I' th' air or th' earth?  
It sounds no more; and, sure, it waits upon  
Some god o' th' island. Sitting on a bank,  
Weeping again the King my father's wreck,  
This music crept by me upon the waters,  
Allaying both their fury and my passion  
With its sweet air. . . .

That this music actually is made by Ariel is a point I will come back to. Now we need only observe that the music *seems* to emanate from the air and earth and water. It is one with the landscape, and its effect upon Ferdinand is similar to the effect of the setting upon several of the others. We think of Adrian: "The air breathes upon us here most sweetly," or Gonzalo: "How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!"

Music puts at rest the fury of the storm. The opposition between music and the tempest is symbolic of the deepest conflict in the play. Indeed, according to G. Wilson Knight, these polar images represent the dominant unifying theme within the entire Shakespearean canon. Here, in any event, there is no mistaking the power of music to allay the forces of disorder. Even Caliban, as readers often note, responds to the melodious atmosphere:



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The isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices. . . .

Caliban's bestiality, the equivalent within human nature of the untamed elements without, is partly offset by his singular, heavy-footed grace of language. (If the language was given him by Miranda, the feeling is his own.) And it is heard, significantly, in homage to the island's bountiful landscape:

I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;  
I'll fish for thee and get thee wood enough.

...

I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow;  
And I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts;  
Show thee a jay's nest and instruct thee how  
To snare the nimble marmoset. I'll bring thee  
To clust'ring filberts and sometimes I'll get thee  
Young scamels from the rock. Wilt thou go with me?

Monstrous though he is, there is in Caliban a vein of crude tenderness that makes itself felt largely as susceptibility to music and landscape. As a result he is more appealing than several of the deceitful, corrupt and besotted men of Europe washed up on this beach. There is not enough music in Caliban to save him, but in *The Tempest* generally music is a measure of the beauty, order, and proportion of the physical universe.

My point is that the story of Prospero's exile, the experience of "reality" in *The Tempest*, cannot be understood as a total repudiation of Gonzalo's utopian fantasy. If the plantation speech rests upon the idea of a beneficent order running through nature, so in a way does the Pythagorean musical motif. So does Prospero's delicate masque. For that matter, the entire fable unquestionably affirms the impulse of civilized man to renew himself by immersion in the simple, spontaneous instinctual life of nature. Witness Ariel, the spirit of air who helps Prospero recognize what is truly human. Once an aloof and haughty scholar, on the island Prospero learns the compassion which finally allows him to restore his enemies to themselves.

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At the moment, already mentioned, when he controls his impulse toward revenge, it is Ariel who gives him his cue:

*Ariel.* . . . if you now beheld them, your affections  
Would become tender.

*Prospero.* Dost thou think so, spirit?

*Ariel.* Mine would, sir, were I human.

*Prospero.* And mine shall.

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling  
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,  
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply  
Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art?  
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,  
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part. . . .

Or, as another token of nature's benignity, witness Prospero's success in bringing his daughter up to perfect womanhood in this remote place. Here, far from the sophisticated society of Europe, he actually does create a brave new world, even if Miranda ingenuously (and how ironically!) confuses it with an old shabby one.

But why, then, if he does not permit us to take Gonzalo and his dreamland seriously, does Shakespeare ask us to feel differently about Prospero and his new world Arcadia? The answer, I believe, may be found by comparing the plantation speech and the lovely masque of Act IV.

There are good reasons for thinking of the masque—Ferdinand calls it a “most majestic vision”—as the equivalent, for Prospero, of Gonzalo's vision of the perfect plantation. Each in its way is a tribute to the principle of natural fecundity. Each depicts an ideal land of abundance and joy. Each has its inception in an image of landscape. At the beginning of the masque Iris (accompanied by soft music) sets the stage by addressing Ceres:

*Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas  
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and pease;  
Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,  
And flat meads thatch'd with stover, them to keep. . . .*

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Later the goddess of agriculture responds by blessing the betrothed couple in these words:

*Earth's increase foison plenty,  
Barns and garner's never empty,  
Vines with clustering bunches growing,  
Plants with goodly burden bowing.  
Spring come to you at the farthest  
In the very end of harvest!  
Scarcity and want shall shun you;  
Ceres' blessing so is on you.*

Like the imaginary plantation, this is in effect another open-hearted utopian vision. Indeed, if we listen closely to Ceres we can hear a distinct echo (especially in the repetition of "foison") of Gonzalo's speech. In my plantation, he is saying:

*. . . nature should bring forth,  
Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,  
To feed my innocent people.*

The affinity between the two visions is heightened by the warm relation between the two men. When he first sees his old friend again, Prospero cries, "Holy Gonzalo, honourable man," and again, a moment later, "O good Gonzalo, / My true preserver."

And yet the differences between the two finally are more revealing than the similarities. Prospero's masque is a dream, it is true, but it is a dream far more consistent with what *The Tempest* tells us of reality. Here the landscape, so far from representing Eden or the original state of nature, is an idealized version of old England—a countryside that men have acted upon for a long time. It is the traditional domain of Ceres, that is, of *agri-culture*, an amalgam of landscape and art or, in the Latin: fields + culture. If the land now looks like a magnificent garden, there is no reason to doubt that it may once have been a hideous wilderness. This paradise is a product of history in a future designed in part by men. There may be something more than a graceful compliment in Ceres' lines: "Spring come to you at the farthest / In the very end of harvest!" In any event,

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the successful blending of art and nature colors all the final affirmations of *The Tempest*. The music of the island is not made up of the native woodnotes wild we might expect to hear in Gonzalo's plantation. Rather it is a product of collaboration between Prospero and Ariel, and so a fitting expression of the pastoral ideal of reconciliation. Miranda, by the same token, combines the qualities of natural simplicity, breeding and education. Her presence requires us to take seriously the prospect of utopia. She has the gift of wonder. (Her name is derived from the Latin, *mirari*, to wonder, or *mirus*, wonderful.) Hence her response when she first sees the court party:

O, wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,

That has such people in't!

The tone of the masque carries over into the final moments of the play, which are filled with a joy that follows the success of organized human effort. It is Prospero's effort that is being rewarded, and the tone differs markedly from that of Gonzalo's vision, with its approval of a soft, passive and indolent style of life. All of Prospero's behavior, including the masque, suggests that half-formed, indistinct idea of history as a record of human improvement, or progress, that was incipient in renaissance thought generally. His commitment to art for the melioration of life reminds us of Francis Bacon, who at this time not only wrote an important chapter in the history of the idea of progress, but who was convinced that the superiority of the present to the past could be explained by specific innovations in the practical arts. It is a testimony to the power of poetry that this hermit, with his magical incantations, can also seem a prophet of the emergent faith in progress.

But the difference between Gonzalo and Prospero is not that one accepts and the other rejects the idea of utopia. Like his gentle friend, Prospero also delights in dreams of the good life. However, he does not lose sight of the line that separates dream and reality. Shakespeare dramatizes the point most tellingly

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when, without warning, Prospero stops the masque. But first, to enhance the effect, we are shown the powerful grip that these images take upon the mind. As he watches the little play, Ferdinand exclaims: "Let me live here ever;/So rare a wonder'd father and a wise/Makes this place Paradise." Ferdinand is carried away, and so (he admits in an aside) is Prospero. That is when he "*starts suddenly, and speaks; after which, to a strange, hollow, and confused noise,*" the actors vanish. Prospero realizes that he "had forgot that foul conspiracy/Of the beast Caliban and his confederates. . . ." Twelve years before, in Milan, he had remained "rapt" in the life of the mind while an attack was being mounted against him. He is not about to repeat that mistake. He has learned that the urgencies of power take precedence, at least in order of time, over visionary pleasures. Yet there is nothing in what he says or does to belittle the masque. Like Gonzalo, Prospero values utopian visions. But his dream is closer, within the world of *The Tempest*, to "reality" or the possible. In fact the masque may be taken as an oblique statement of the principles for which he now goes forth to suppress Caliban and redeem his European enemies.

The difference between the masque and the plantation speech, finally, is the difference between a pastoral and a primitive ideal. For Prospero the center of value is located in the traditional landscape of Ceres. He stands on a middle ground, a terrain of mediation between nature and art, feeling and intellect. Any inclination that he might have had to trust in primal nature (as reflected by his initial attitude toward Caliban) now has been checked by his experience of the hideous wilderness, by what he knows of the storm, by his own aggressive impulses and, of course, by what he has come to accept as the truth about Caliban. Even in the closing moments of the play, when he forgives all his former enemies, he says nothing to suggest a change in his estimate of Caliban as "A devil, a born devil, on whose nature/Nurture can never stick. . . ." His recognition of inherent and perhaps irremediable aggressiveness in man distinguishes Prospero's utopian bent from sentimental primitivism. But neither does he go to the opposite extreme. That

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he has reservations about the cultivated man, about power, intellect and art, is implied by his final act of renunciation. In the end he abjures the potent art that has set him apart from ordinary men. As if distrusting the uses of power, he vows to bury his staff and drown his book. The action of *The Tempest* has the effect of breaking down the duality that first sets it off. It is a play in praise neither of nature nor of art, but of a symbolic process that is directed toward the restoration of harmony between them.

### IV

I began by saying that there are revealing connections, beyond the facts about Shakespeare's sources, between *The Tempest* and America. But so far I have not discussed them directly. Let us now consider what they are and what they reveal.

The first connection is genetic. It links the theme of the play to the contradiction within the Elizabethan idea of the new world. Is the virgin land best described as a garden or a hideous wilderness? In *The Tempest*, as in the travel reports, we can find apparent confirmation of both images. The island, like America, could be Eden or a hellish desert. As the action progresses, the weight of its implication swings like a pendulum between the poles of nature and civilization. The opening movement, when Milan comes to the wilderness, describes the widest arc: a vast distance between the howling storm, in which art counts for everything, and Gonzalo's vision of Eden regained, where nature counts for everything. But as Prospero's power makes itself felt, the arc becomes shorter. His aim is reconciliation, and as he masters the situation, the pendulum slows down; we move from storm to calm, from discord toward harmony. In the end we are shown the possibility of man's earthly transfiguration.

But what justification are we given for so utopian a vision? Is the happy ending a tribute to Prospero's art or to the musical order, latent in nature, represented by Ariel? The question is unanswerable. That is because the play affirms, beyond all else, the underlying unity that binds consciousness to the energy and

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order manifest in unconscious nature. A resolution of the pastoral conflict is conceivable, Shakespeare implies, because art itself is a product of nature. In *The Winter's Tale*, a play closely related to *The Tempest* both in spirit and time of composition, he had made his most searching statement of the theme. Perdita and Polixenes are discussing the relative merit of wild and man-bred flowers. In Perdita's garden there are no cultivated flowers:

... of that kind

Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not  
To get slips of them.

*Polixenes.* Wherefore, gentle maiden,  
Do you neglect them?

*Perdita.* For I have heard it said,  
There is an art which in their piedness shares  
With great creating Nature.

*Polixenes.* Say there be;  
Yet Nature is made better by no mean  
But Nature makes that mean; so over that art  
Which you say adds to Nature, is an art  
That Nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry  
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race. This is an art  
Which does mend Nature, change it rather, but  
The art itself is Nature.

The context, it is generally conceded, lends Shakespeare's support to Polixenes' view of the matter: the artificial is but a special, human category of the natural. Mind and nature are in essence one. This conviction justifies the hope of movement toward harmony that *The Tempest*, like most pastoral, finally celebrates.

What is there about *The Tempest*, however, that makes for the rare and compelling credibility, even profundity, that we do not ordinarily expect of pastoral? Granted that no one answer will do, I would suggest that certain realities of the age of discovery lend this play its astonishing force and depth. A universal awareness of vast, remote and unspoiled continents had



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renewed the plausibility of the pastoral dream. Although most earlier versions of pastoral had been set in never-never lands, and although *The Tempest* contains only one allusion to the actual new world, its setting is not wholly fanciful. Witness the reality of the storm, and the naturalistic idiom in which it is dramatized. We begin with a commonplace event of the age: a ship caught in a storm and beached on an uninhabited island. It is like an Elizabethan news report. By beginning with this episode, Shakespeare avoids the artificiality, the initial wrenching away from the world of ordinary experience, that we expect of pastoral. To be sure, we move swiftly from the tempest into a world of dream-like enchantment, but nevertheless we move there from an event that has the firm texture of the actual. On this island we encounter no courtiers masquerading as shepherds; these are castaways, survivors of a wreck, and their situation keeps us in mind of the real world beyond. True, the body of the play is closer in texture to myth than reality, but the fact remains that Shakespeare, unlike most pastoral poets, devises an action that carries us from the actual to the mythical *and back again*. The ending is controlled by the conventions of comedy, yet in the closing moments Prospero reminds us of Caliban's unredeemable character, his own approaching death and, to come full circle, his need of Ariel's assistance in providing calm seas for the return voyage. The realistic strain here is one of the distinguishing features of pastoral set in America. Like the verse, with its vibrant sense of place, the action seems to have been affected by the poet's awareness of an unspoiled terrain—a new world that really exists. The imaginative authority of the fable arises from the seriousness and wonder with which Shakespeare is able to depict a highly civilized man testing his powers in a green and desolate land.

In addition to the genetic connection between *The Tempest* and America, there is another that can only be called prophetic. By this I mean that the play, in its over-all design, prefigures the design of the classic American fables. The important link here is the idea of a redemptive journey into the wilderness.

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As in *Walden*, *Moby Dick* or *Huckleberry Finn*, the journey begins with a renunciation. The hero gives up his place in society and withdraws into nature. But in *The Tempest*, as in the best of American pastoral, the moral significance of this move is ambiguous. That is to say, the island does not represent the good. It is, after all, the home of Caliban, who is a brute. He is as evil in his way as the wicked men of Milan. The island is not, in itself, an ideal country, any more than the sea is in *Moby Dick*, or the river in *Huckleberry Finn*. In a world that contains corrupt Milan, however, the island may represent a relative good. What it offers, precisely because of the absence of civilization, man's true home in history, is a temporary return to first things. Here ambition, bloodless intellectuality, courtly artifice—all the defenses of everyday life—are stripped away. Here only essentials count: first things first. America, Emerson will say, is a land without history, hence a land "where man asks questions for which man was made."

Perhaps what chiefly enables us to take this idea of a "return to nature" seriously is its temporariness. It is a journey from society into a desert and back again. On the island the men of Milan regain access to sources of vitality and truth. What happens during their symbolic exile is what may happen to us in any of our departures from routine waking consciousness. It is what may happen in sleep, especially in dreams (the action of *The Tempest*, after all, is a kind of dream), in the act of love, perhaps even in death where the race, it may be said, renews itself by making room for the newborn. When the city is corrupt some such renewal, a return to a knowledge of life in its true proportions, is a necessary condition for the restoration of balance, justice and harmony. A harmonious working relation between man and the natural order is a means as well as an end in Shakespeare's fable. The work of redemption is accomplished by Prospero in collaboration with Ariel. Even as we draw near the final unravelling, Prospero needs Ariel's help. He requires "some heavenly music" to lead the court party to the climax. In the closing scene most of the lost Europeans find each other and themselves:

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... in one voyage

Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,  
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife  
Where he himself was lost, Prospero his dukedom  
In a poor isle, and all of us ourselves  
When no man was his own.

And so to Naples. In the end, when Prospero's work is done, the entire party prepares for the journey back to Europe. But it would be wrong to conclude that they are returning to exactly the same world from which they came. Prospero's magic, forcing them to face reality as individuals, also has effected a change of state. In *The Tempest* regeneration is political as well as psychological. We may say, in other words, that the symbolic action has three spatial stages. It begins in a corrupt city, passes through a raw wilderness, and then, finally, leads back to the city. But now the city in some measure has been redeemed by the renewed access of its citizens to the primal sources of being. This third stage is, in effect, the pastoral utopia, a land where the root conflict between art and nature, sophistication and simplicity, may be mitigated. The pattern is remarkably like the pattern of our typical American fables. To be sure, many of them do not arrive at anything like the final resolution of Shakespearean comedy. Often the American hero makes his way out of society into the wilderness, but in the end he cannot find the appropriate landscape of reconciliation. Nevertheless, the implicit solution is much the same. It prefigures Jefferson's ideal Virginia, a community that will avoid the oppressive over-civilization of Europe and the anarchic barbarism of the frontier. In this view the topography of *The Tempest* has much in common with the moral geography of the American imagination. Prospero's island, like the new world, is a wilderness that serves as a stage in the process of redemption. It is the scene of a "pastoral moment" that changes the course of history. And Shakespeare's play, written in the hour that American colonization began, therefore may be read as one of the most illuminating of prefaces to our literature.

## *Richard Gillman*

### HALLOWE'EN

Upon a night designed for fear,  
To scare the living with the dead,  
I gave a fruit a human look  
And flamed its inner head.

Against the pane, against the night,  
It veritably lived a while,  
But self-doubt flickered in its eyes  
And licked its jagged smile.

Not looking disinterred, not dread  
Enough to keep a chill from dying,  
It was, for all my daughter knew,  
In need of rock-a-bying.

My fault: I put my fear inside,  
My fierceness I forgot about.  
I blew a breath through one scared eye  
And put the damned thing out.

## RODOLPHE BRES DIN



1822-1885

*Dear Théophile [Gautier]. You remember that I spoke to you about an old friend, M. Rodolphe Bresdin, who has turned up in Paris again after an absence of twelve years. I do not know whether his drawings have been accepted by the Salon; but in any case it would be good of you to see a few of his works. I know you well enough to believe that there are some things amongst them that will give you infinite pleasure. So receive Bresdin as an old acquaintance; after you have examined his work, he will doubtless create this feeling in you. Yours, Ch. Baudelaire.*

*April 29, 1861.*

MR



THE COMEDY OF DEATH Lithograph 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " 1854 N.44

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# BRESDIN L'ÉTRANGE

CLAUDE ROGER-MARX

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY KATHERINE ALLEN CLARKE

HOW SWIFTLY THE MEMORY OF A MAN GLIDES INTO OBLIVION, even that of the most fantastic of men! Rodolphe Bresdin, nicknamed Chien-Caillou (from *The Last of the Mohicans* by Fenimore Cooper), was just twenty-five years old when he inspired Champfleury's novellette published in 1847, bringing fame to the author. Nevertheless, the sentimental bohemian described by the writer had far less of the flavor and picturesqueness that characterized, to the day of Bresdin's death, his behavior, his gaily-borne poverty, his childishness, and his perpetual need of being on the move: a genius who escapes from ordinary norms and who, in certain traits of his character, seems to foreshadow at times Gauguin, at others Van Gogh, and at still others Henri Rousseau.

The admiration for Rodolphe Bresdin expressed by Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier, Banville, Mallarmé, Courbet, Léon Cladel, Paul Arène, Huysmans, Robert de Montesquiou, did not however succeed in raising from semi-obscurity the man whom Odilon Redon, the keenest and most exact of his biographers, with Alcide Dusolier and Fourès, called a "blue blood" and considered, even more than Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt, as his master. Only a few museums in America and in Holland, the Print Room of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and a few collectors in Bordeaux are still passionately faithful to a work that remains completely unknown to the general public, no doubt because it is almost exclusively composed of very rare prints and drawings, often minute in size and yet immense in their spiritual dimensions. Only a few very rare paintings are known to exist.

Chien-Caillou, at least during his youth, produced an extremely limited number of engravings (usually six or seven copies, and each copy different from the others). Legend has it that he smeared wax on his copper plates with a shoebrush, and that a second-hand dealer sold the engravings of his *Flight into Egypt*, his *Holy Family*, his *Adoration of the Magi*, his *Apparition*, and his *Miracle of the Fishes* as Rembrandts. Several engravings have four or five subjects placed side by side. The earliest of these were made in 1839 (he was then only seventeen), and probably date from the time of his first sojourn in Paris. Some are



scarcely larger than a postage stamp or a thumbnail sketch. Although we have no exact knowledge of his training, it is certain that he made close studies of Dürer, Callot, and especially Rembrandt. According to Champfleury's fantastic account, a *Descent from the Cross* decorated his hovel. He called Rembrandt "his God," Redon writes. A particular minuscule *Man with Turban* seems to derive directly from the Rembrandt series of oriental heads. A little oblong etching, recently discovered, is signed and dated 1839. A framework made of fine parallel strokes encloses a wooded and mountainous landscape in the center of which three erect crosses stand out against a cloud. It is necessary to use a lens to discover the group of disciples and faithful women who are on their way to the Burial. The treatment of the trees, the rocks, the feathery vegetation in the foreground, the dissemination of light, the direction of the strokes, are already typical.

How did Bresdin happen to take up engraving? Redon, although more precise than the others, says in one place that he was the son of a tanner, and in another of a metal planisher. "Born in the midst of copper, he told me that when he was a little boy he used to sneak away the tools sent to his father to be repaired, in order to produce his first instinctive scrawls. His mother was of a noble family, and this double heritage might explain the ill-assorted traits of his character. He was of the people and of the aristocracy. He doubtless owed to his ancestry the peculiarities of his strange nature: fantastic, brusque, and good; at one moment withdrawn and at the next open and playful. . . ." He was, added Redon, "a man of medium height [as is in fact apparent in the portraits of him engraved by Bouvenne and Boutet], heavy-set and powerful, with short arms and a face lighted by clear, gay eyes. A high placid forehead unmarred by a single furrow. I saw him in Bordeaux—it was in 1864—in extreme penury that he forgot in his slavish labor. He was living in a street in a slum where his actions inspired a vague feeling of mistrust in the poverty-stricken population around him." (34 rue Fosse aux Lions, the address one can read at the bottom of his etchings, and sometimes followed by the word—"Alas!")

Redon was unable to establish the year when, leaving the Loire-Inférieure region where he was born, Bresdin began to associate in Paris with Mürger, Théophile Gautier, Champfleury, Baudelaire, and Henriquel Dupont. It has been agreed to date the most famous and largest of his lithographs, *The Good Samaritan*, as of 1848,\* when he had

\*It is likely that Roger Marx misread the date engraved in reverse in the lower left corner; it is 1861.

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taken up residence in Toulouse. According to Dusolier (whose brochure is dated 1861), Bresdin was living in a sort of stable crowded with birds, cats, dogs, doves, rats, rabbits, which he rented for five francs a year. This atmosphere he was to reproduce throughout his life, whether in Paris, in Toulouse, or in Bordeaux, as if this destitution, this litter, and the society of little creatures, which earned him the name of "The Master with the Rabbit," were indispensable to his happiness. "How can you live in such a hovel?" he was asked. "I have," he replied, "bread, the produce of my garden, and the best of drinks" (this was water from a nearby spring). Although he had his first child, Rodolphine, in 1859, his great dream was to emigrate to the Americas. Paris saw him again in 1860, after an absence of twelve years. Léon Cladel describes him as "stocky, hairy, and already aged by extreme poverty." It was at this period that he executed the celebrated series of thirteen engravings for *La Revue Fantaisiste*.

In the same review, illustrating an article by Théodore de Banville on the Salon of 1861, appears a most admirable reproduction of *The Good Samaritan*, also entitled *Abd-el-Kader Discovering a Christian*, exhibited under the number 413. "Unleashed chaos, splendid luxuriance, in which everything overflows, the vegetation, the fierce aliveness of every object, the frightful shadows, the powerful light. . . ." In the foreground, the poet continues, "a still pond and a variety of inextricably entangled growth: thistles, reeds in wild disorder, tree trunks twisted in reptilian poses, branch-animals with great jaws agape. Upon closer examination one perceives a host of hidden creatures. On the edge of the quiet pond great birds solemnly dream. . . . On a grass-covered mound triumphant branches spread like an open fan, like waving plumes, asters with sun-like faces, palms sing the flashing hymn of triumphal vegetation. Then, like two out-sized stage wings, revealing a backdrop of brilliant light, two masses of black trees upon which every leaf, more numerous than the stars in the heavens, millions of billions of leaves, can be seen and counted; and on the highest little twigs, on the scarcely unfolded leaflets, tiny birds pass and fly. . . . over all this stupendous composition, a sky tortuous, tormented, broken into minute clouds, an ethereal ocean in which each wave is alive and must surely have a name. Finally, in the far distance, in bright, serene light, a gigantic city: a forest of stones as big as the forest of trees. . . ."

It is not surprising that Bresdin, whom we find once more in Bordeaux in 1862, where he was to spend seven years, was troubled because "his eyes had been completely ruined for a long time." Two other mas-

terpieces of engraving, the great *Flight into Egypt*—that nocturne of brilliant light which he called *La Vigoureuse*—and *The Comedy of Death*, executed in 1854, which inspired one of Gautier's poems, plunge us into the same proliferation, into the same sublime jumble. *A Rebours* (in which Huysmans portrays Robert de Montesquiou under the name of Des Esseintes) describes this latter composition: "In an implausible landscape bristling with trees, bushes, tufts of grass which take on shapes of demons and phantoms, covered with birds with rats' heads and vegetable tails, and on a field strewn with vertebrae, ribs, skulls, stand twisted, split willow trees surmounted by skeletons, arms upraised, waving bouquets, intoning a chant of victory, while a Christ flies away in a dappled sky, a hermit meditates within a grotto, an emaciated wretch lies dying of hunger, his feet touching a pool of water."

Weary of "struggling with a field spoiled by weeds," Bresdin, who signed one of his letters "your friend in spite of rain and wind," left Bordeaux in 1870 for Paris. Hospitalized at Necker, he thought his end had come. "The strife has lasted 48 years. Peace will come. I am too tired and it has lasted too long." An entertainment was organized for his benefit under the direction of Courbet.

For a long time he disappeared. Then, in 1876, Paris saw him "disembark" in a café, having just returned from Canada "as if he had just come back from Asnières," Paul Arène wrote, "loaded with bundles, and followed by his wife, six children, and a Negro." The America of which he constantly dreamed as he made plans to illustrate *Robinson Crusoe* or *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (so close he was to Rousseau in the candor of his exoticism), offered him nothing but rebuffs. Departing with the hope of engraving a bank note there, he brought back with him scarcely more than a big "diploma" ornamented with floral motifs and emblematic figures.

The last years of his life, as assistant roadman at the Arc de Triomphe, he lived in a garret transformed into a garden which he cultivated to the great consternation of the other tenants whose quarters were inundated by his watering. Having no other means of existence than the sale of his produce at the market, sleeping fully dressed for lack of bedclothes, he died in 1885 of a stroke at Sèvres, far from his wife and children, in the big wooden bed he had carved himself. Champfleury and Léon Cladel followed his remains to a pauper's grave.

At the same time *precise* and *visionary*, as Gautier had written of Victor Hugo (who, when he evoked the Orient and the Middle Ages, was like a more tenebrous Chien-Caillo, and more inclined to antitheses),

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Bresdin often said that the true artist does not need to consult the exterior world, "that he has everything within himself"—a surprising statement from a man whose entire life was spent in delineating with a patience equal to that of Nature and bordering on madness the individual blades of grass in a field, the black lace of the forest, the fissures in the rocks, the steeples and minarets of cities in the far distance, a shower of birds, the ripples in water and sky. Incapable of drawing from a model but for hours on end watching a spider spin its web, it was surrounded by his starving dogs, his little tree frogs, and his rabbits that he envisioned tribes in flight, armies locked in battle, or Indian chieftains (*The Roman Legion*, *The Procession*); Flemish and Moldavian interiors where, beneath ceilings smoked by fitches of bacon, helmeted soldiers and serving maids mingle in a crowded mass; Niagara Falls; ports teeming with masts and hulls; the procession in which rides the haughty Sulamite; monks crouching in the hollow of a worm-eaten tree trunk; battlefields bristling with banners and lances.

Like Daumier, like Barye—who never had to go farther afield than Fontainebleau—his interior wealth sufficed him to transport us into desert or jungle, to feel and communicate to us the shock of the fantastic. "Do you see that chimney-pot?" he said to Redon—who, initiated by him into the art of copper-plate engraving and lithography, and inspired by his themes, gratefully signed "pupil of Bresdin" on one of his first etchings, *The Ford* (1865)—"He tells me a legend. If you have the power to observe and clearly comprehend, imagine the strangest, most bizarre subject. If it is based upon and contained within the limits of that section of the wall, your vision will come alive. That is art."

Some of his works, because of their oddness, their proliferations, their accumulation of details, remind one of Altdorfer, Bosch, Breughel, the deviltries of Callot; not only *The Comedy of Death*, an ideal frontispiece for the *Fleurs du Mal* (and which would have been far more in the spirit of Baudelaire than the frontispiece by Rops); but numerous plates such as *The Hermit at Prayer*, *The Hunter Surprised by Death*, *The Haunted House*, or that lugubrious *Château-fort* (where one sees, in a landscape crawling with human-headed larvae, a female bearer of scythe and hourglass climb out of a sarcophagus to halt a warrior astride a white horse); and numerous drawings in which jeering skeletons, foretelling those of James Ensor, cavort on the banks of a stream, scrape a violin at the feet of a hanged mother still clasping her dead baby, spy upon the imprudent bathing woman, or discover a drowned woman.

But Bresdin, to be mysterious, has recourse neither to the baroque

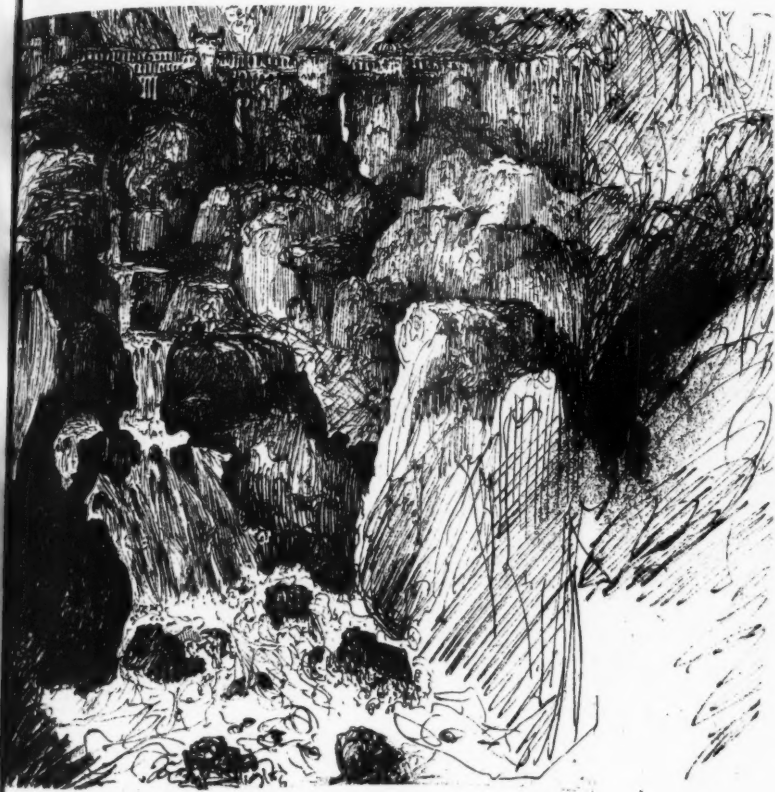
nor the macabre. Nature in perpetual evolution, the struggles of shadow and light, all that indefinable, incomprehensible seething hidden behind the appellations that for convenience we attach to appearances: it is from this that his art derives its beauty, its grandeur. Examine the various *Holy Families* he engraved on stone and on copper (*The Holy Family of the Torrent, of the Pitcher, with Fawns*); *The Bath of the Nymphs*; the series planned to illustrate fables (*The Whale, The Peacocks, The Hunter*); and the title page frontispiece (1868-1878) covered with pathetic inscriptions: "Calvary of Old Caillou, Ah! who will deliver me from the *pigouffes* [sic]"; then, on the last proof: "I have been carrying this stone for 50 years."

I have spoken of the grandeur of this art. However, Bresdin seems to have eyed the universe through a magnifying glass, and it is with lens in hand that one must move through these teeming landscapes in order to make innumerable discoveries. "This genius," Banville wrote, "makes of the unheard and of the unbreathable his daily nourishment." Such minutiae, such tangles, would exasperate us in other artists. In opposition to the redoubtable breed of miniaturists who, by excess of fidelity to detail, lose all sense of the whole; in opposition also to Doré, stage designer devoid of mystery, he displayed in the service of the infinite such patience in the finishing. The slow construction of these microcosms never caused him to lose enthusiasm or balance: a world in action is ceaselessly elaborated and transformed before our eyes.

Whether he engraved on copper or stone, it is always the same performance—concise, meticulous, and calm as in his drawings (of which he almost always kept a duplicate on tissue-thin paper, a copy which sometimes surpassed the first proof, owing to its simplifications). When one analyzes the engraving under a lens, one discovers, grouped together, myriad dots which remind one of the finest grain of an aquatint. Bresdin often used a roller. As for the lithographs, they were executed with a pen, evidently without his ever having recourse to a greasy crayon. "This visionary," Redon wrote, "thinned the ink soberly, carefully, and one felt how decisive this first step was for him. He treated the liquid with care, and kept all dust away." Often, after a first impression, his demanding fantasy would substitute one person for another, add a turret to the castle, a youth to the window of the castle, a ripple to the lake, permit the tree or flower to unfold a little more, change the composition of luminosity, as if he wanted his plate to continue to escape from immobility. Different dates testify to constant intervention, and also the addition of signatures, of monograms (sometimes five are dis-

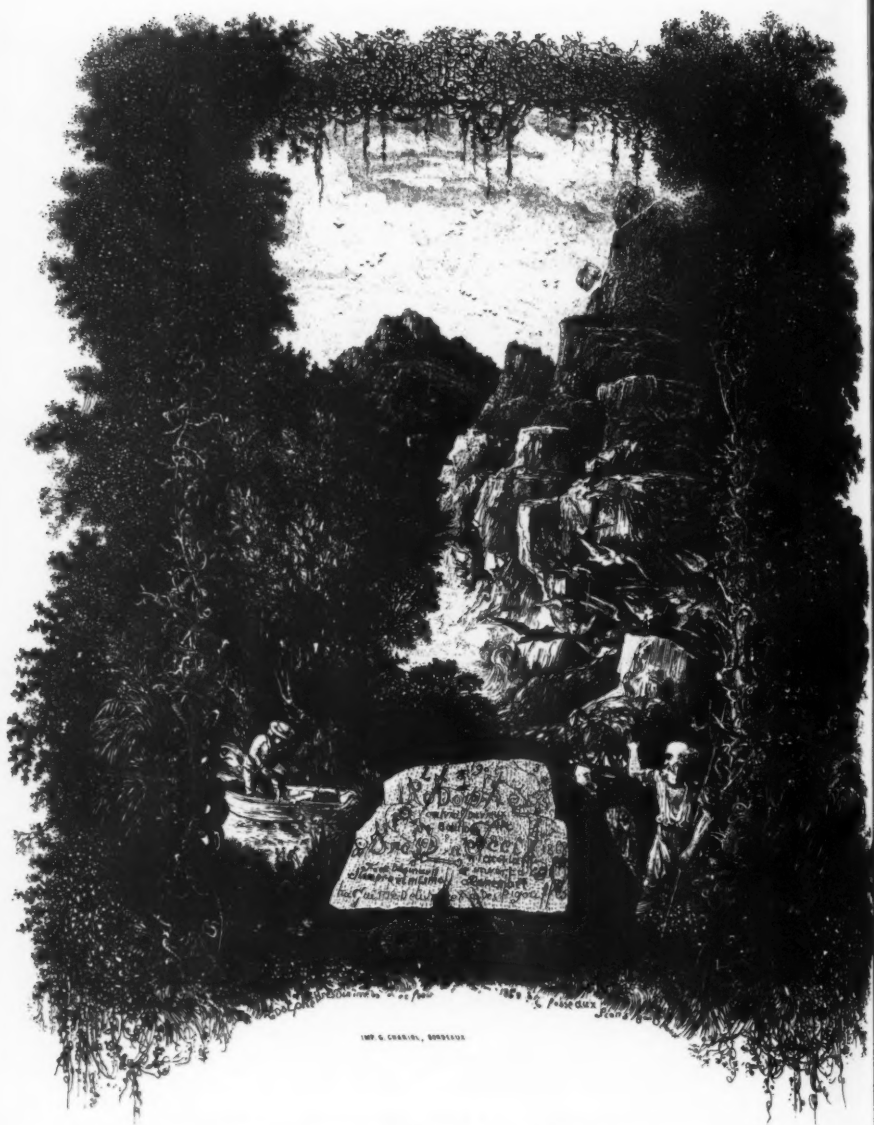
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covered on the same copper plate). Such is the fineness of stroke, the multiplicity of strokes and lines within lines, that it is easy to understand how his eyes gave out. However, even in his last prints, such as *The Watercourse* (1880), which portrays an inextricable intermingling of branches, in the center of which a sudden clear space reveals the sky, the technique is in no way simplified. At the age of sixty the same urgencies consoled this methodical seer; he had lost none of the gifts of his childhood, and his final etching (1883), in which he gathered together all his themes—ship's yards, boats, belfries, thatched huts, palaces, colossal statues, shimmering shorelines, and twisting clouds—is entitled *My Dream*.



AQUEDUCT AND WATERFALLS Drawing Actual size c. 1870  
Coll. Swetstoff Gallery, Boston





I HAVE BEEN CARRYING THIS STONE FOR 50 YEARS Lithograph  
 First State  $9\frac{3}{8}'' \times 7\frac{3}{8}''$  1868 N.48a

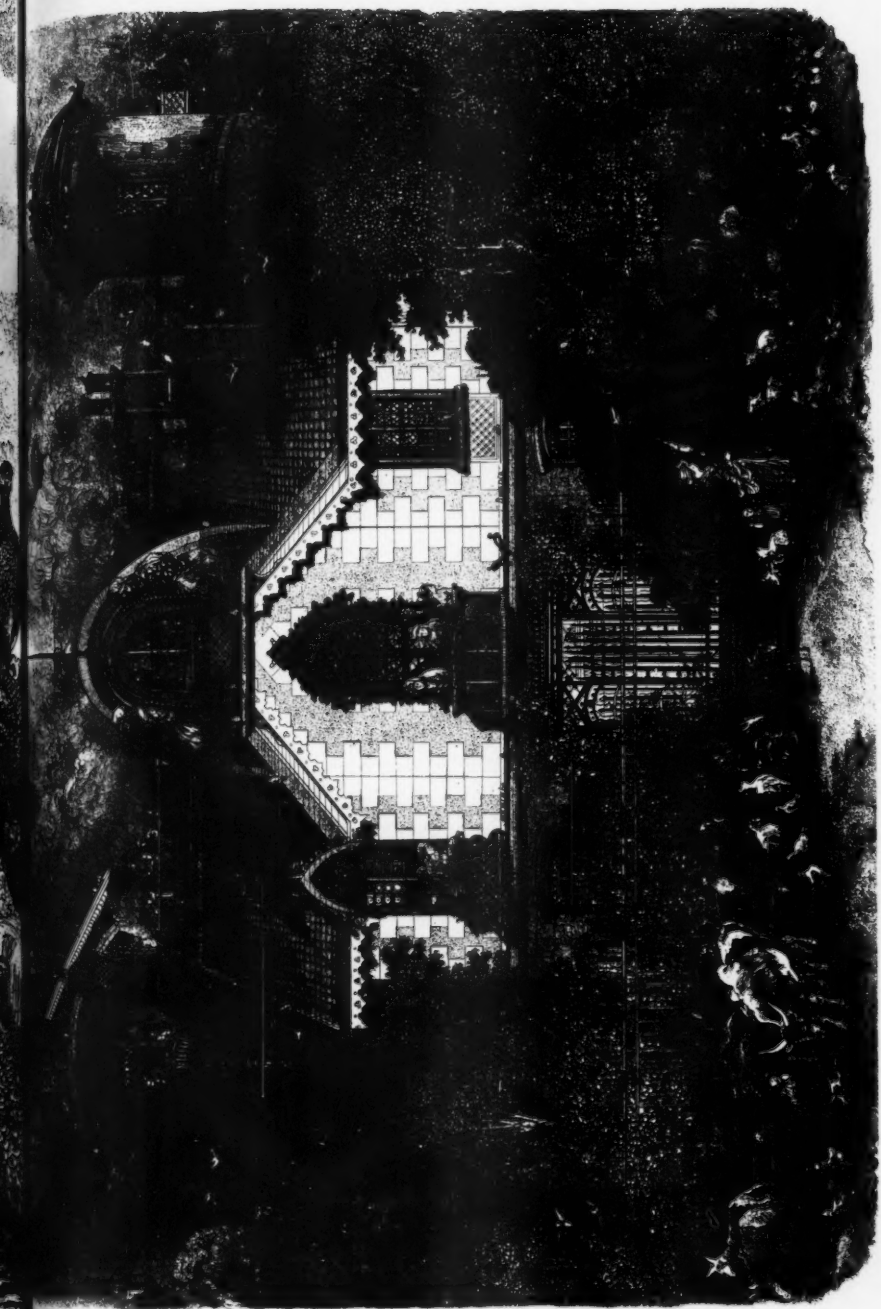




THE CASTLE IN THE MOUNTAINS Lithograph Actual size 1868 N.59



THE PEACOCKS Lithograph 1868 N.115



THE ENCHANTED CASTLE Lithograph 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " 1871 N.42

## ODILON REDON ON HIS MASTER BRES DIN

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY ALEXANDER AND ANNE HULL

WE ARE SOMETIMES APT TO FORGET THE MEN OF MERIT whom fortune sends us; real talent is not always greeted with the respect it deserves. Wherever thought asserts itself without the support of a militant struggle, without the vigorous contradictions or lively approbations of enthusiasm, it can be said that the man of merit receives inadequate recompense for his generous efforts. That is why, in his own country, the genius often succumbs for lack of adversaries to oppose him or friends to exalt him. Talent coming from afar, already surrounded by the prestige of an established reputation, succeeds no doubt in shining more brightly; but what impediments, what difficulties it still encounters in our unpreparedness, in the inexperience of a few judges who are often too eager to explain it before having completely understood it!

When talent presents itself in a rather free and novel way, our prejudices may at times deceive us, and its finest aspect goes unnoticed by us where it is most worthy and most powerful. M. Bresdin, although much esteemed by a small group of devotees whose admiration is well justified, has not achieved in Bordeaux the position and the recognition which he deserves. His work, although preceded by a justly acquired reputation and already praised by several authoritative critics, has not elicited the excitement which such a fresh and unusual talent seems to demand. None the less, he is truly an artist of refinement: by his great originality, by his rich, varied, and vigorous creation, we recognize the true mark of the artist of high rank and good lineage; for these reasons, above all, he is to be recommended to the attention of art lovers enamored of novel beauties, of rare perfumes, to all those indeed who, bored with insipid imitations, seek art along unknown or unexplored paths.

Three processes serve in turn to express M. Bresdin's unique inspiration: pen drawing on stone, etching, and drawing—forming a completely new genre which he alone practices and of which he is, so to speak, the creator. His most widely known work is a large drawing on stone, known by the name of *The Good Samaritan*. A strange creation. We should say here that the artist did not intend to represent the landscape

which we see every day from our window; judged from this point of view, this work would certainly be imperfect, for there is no other work among those of our contemporaries which has been less inspired by any spirit of imitation. What he wished, what he attempted, was but to initiate us into the impressions of his own dream. A mystical and very strange dream, it is true, a restless and vague reverie, but what does that matter? Even if the ideal is precise, art, on the contrary, surely draws all its power from its eloquence, its brilliance, its greatness in those things which leave to the imagination the task of defining them.

A conception and the search for the proper elements to formulate it—to strike, to seize our troubled imagination—that is the only theory which governed this work, if indeed the informality of fantasy obeys any law. Considered from this point of view, this work has truly achieved its goal, for no other leaves in our mind such a strong mark, so vivid an impression and one of such great originality.

We can add to this work *The Holy Family*, created by the same process but in a smaller dimension, which is much more suitable to this type of drawing where detail is so painstakingly sought. It is more complete, richer, freer in its expression. Nothing could be more naïve, more touching, than this little page, surely created in a moment of auspicious enthusiasm, of abandonment to the ideal. Delicate and careful pursuit of detail, richness of composition—none the less restrained, sober, and simple in effect.

Such is the high aesthetic quality of this work, little known because it is more and more rarely seen, but which will remain certainly as the most complete expression of the strivings of its author. We may also add *The Comedy of Death*, a work of a different scope, less plastic no doubt, but no less interesting. And finally, the drafts for a rather large set of illustrations which the artist was unable to finish. In the first plates of this collection, so special, so different from anything being done today, we can still delve deeply into a real treasure of capricious fantasy.

As an etcher, M. Bresdin is less well known. Nevertheless this versatile and rapid technique is certainly where the artist found his true element. He is acquainted with all its resources and ruses. He was driven to the most subtle and refined efforts by his own temperament, and also by a rigorous conscience, and we can say that his etchings are but a long series of experiments undertaken with the unceasing desire to approach perfection. And what variety, what versatility of means! He attacks the copper with the assurance of an artist for whom the process has ceased to be refractory. We need not insist on that material skill which would

make him only a secondary artist, for he possesses a more important merit which gives him a unique place among contemporary etchers: he is a creator.

To all the resources of the subtle and consummate technician he adds the greater qualities of the thinker and the charm of imagination. Indeed, is there anyone more unexpected and more varied in his fantasies? Landscapes, seascapes, battles, interiors, and the most varied of genre subjects serve in turn as an excuse for this vagabond imagination to display here and there its richest caprices and to transform and beautify all the objects which attract it in the wide field it traverses.

*The Travelling Tartar Family*, the *Old Houses*, etc., are among the pen-and-ink drawings. Here the author is more true to life. This technique, which permits retouching, also allows him to come closer to nature, for which he has always had a humble veneration. We should perhaps point out here the error spread by a few critics who have said far too often that M. Bresdin descends too directly from the mystic German masters. Certainly we recognize in him an ardent communion with Rembrandt, and especially with Albrecht Dürer.

Reverence for the masters is not a very great fault, and let us not attach too much blame to archaism. When it is completely understood, archaism is a sanction. A work of art descends directly from another work; if the study of nature gives us the necessary means to manifest our individuality, if observation and patient analysis of reality are the first elements of our language, it is no less true that love of the beautiful, the quest for beautiful models, must incessantly sustain our faith. It is not surprising then if the fervent disciple offers at times the pale image of a god whom he seeks and whom he adores.

Happy indeed are those who feel themselves sufficiently worthy, sufficiently strong, to walk without being dazzled in the light of the glorious masters surrounded by fervent admirers, for whom posterity yet reserves, as an immortal homage, the gift of its finest laurels! Let us welcome their disciples! If M. Bresdin has any relationship to these masters, it must be pointed out that it is much more in this method than in his thought; for his personality has survived durably and victoriously a contact which would have crushed a less gifted disciple. To sustain him he has indeed a vision of the world which no master has taught him.

His distinguishing mark, the thing that no one among the ancients or the moderns could give him, is that unalterable individuality, that remarkable color, which produces throughout his work those strange, mysterious, legendary effects; that freedom with which he handles na-



ture, which reflects, even in the least of his works, an inexpressible sadness. For even though he is awkward in directly reproducing nature, though the poorest student in an academy would be more skillful in representing in detail the objects which meet his eye, the artist is struck by these objects, and often by what is most expressive and most alive in them.

We have certainly seen those bizarre clouds, those murky skies, so profound and so sad. We know what use he has made of those jumbled mixtures full of strange objects, where the eye is led to pursue a thousand and one apparitions. He has also a particular admiration for water in its tender or mysterious aspect. He is, then, a landscape painter; and so, a modern. He always sets his favorite scenes under the open sky; witness *The Travelling Tartar Family*, that page so strongly impregnated with feeling and impression.

Moreover, in a way which is peculiar to the French school, the artist in him is backed up by the thinker. That imagination, impetuous and youthful as it is, seems contained and almost dominated by a constant desire in which the exclusive and dominant state of his interior being is betrayed, though no doubt unconsciously. What we find everywhere, almost from the beginning to the end of his work, is the man enamored of solitude, fleeing the world, fleeing desperately under a sky without homeland, in the anguish of a hopeless and unending exile. This dream, this constant anxiety, appears in the most diverse shapes. Sometimes it is in the form of the divine child, in *The Flight to Egypt*, so often reproduced by the artist. At times it is a whole family, a legion, an army, a whole people fleeing, always fleeing, from civilized humanity.

This is what especially distinguishes M. Bresdin. This is what the Dutch and German masters could not give him, for this human and philosophical side of art is a quality in which the French school takes pride.

So it is also among the etchings and the original drawings that we must look for the genuine significance of this individuality. It is in these techniques that we must study it in order to succeed in understanding it fully. Therefore, if the City consents to own an example of this artist's work, let it choose from that part which contains his most complete expression, and above all let it put into this choice all the discernment demanded by such a serious undertaking, one so important to true art-lovers.

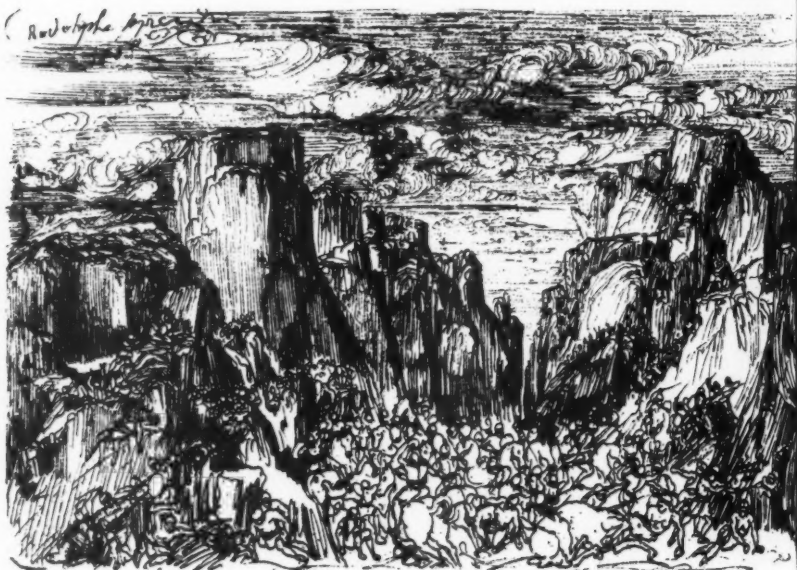
We often believe that people who devote themselves to art are only obeying a frivolous taste or inclination; if we look more closely, if our



attention becomes more enlightened, we shall see that such at times is the lot of the purest and most severe consciences.

Therefore, if we truly wish to enrich public collections with works worthy of imitation, if we seek these works among artists of merit who contribute new influences to art, we shall always find them among those who, along with the excellence of talent, show that praiseworthy disinterestedness which is always accompanied by sincerity.

These rare natures seldom ask for recognition; their only misfortune is that they retire too easily into a discreetly silent self-communion. Let us go to them; let us try to understand them better by a deeper analysis of their creations. But even though there are still doubts and hesitations concerning the proper appreciation of this artist who has already belonged to Bordeaux for several years, there are none the less a few serious art-lovers who did not take long to recognize the true value of this most interesting personality; we believe strongly that their esteem is preparing for him in the future the just approbation which he deserves.



FANTASTIC BATTLE SCENE Lithograph Actual size 1869

# BRESDIN IN AMERICA

MARIUS-ARY LEBLOND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY WILLARD R. TRASK

THE LIFE OF MY FATHER, THE FAMOUS BUT UNAPPRECIATED engraver Rodolphe Bresdin, who is now called "the French Rembrandt," is the tragic story of an obsession—the obsession of America, or as he put it, of "the Indies."

It goes back to his adolescence, and it is to that wild passion for the New World that he owes his nickname, "Chien-Caillou." Here is the story. . . . Bresdin, who was born in Brittany, had come to Paris to study drawing. He was twenty years old. Fenimore Cooper's novels were then at the height of their popularity. Impatient with family restrictions, already half a vagabond, Bresdin plunged one day into *The Last of the Mohicans* and made his first contact with the America—"the Indies"—which was to cast the irresistible fascination of an Eldorado or a Promised Land over more than half of his life. With the ardor of twenty, he fell passionately in love with the hero, Chingachgook. He thought of nothing else as he walked the streets, talked of nothing else in the studios. He even signed one of his etchings "Chingachgook." His fiery enthusiasm for the Indian hero soon earned him the pretty nickname of "Chingachgook" from his fellow-students.

One day a number of them came to his lodging inquiring for "Chingachgook." The concierge in his nightcap, half-deaf, heard "Chien-Caillou." "No," he said, "your friend Chien-Caillou is out." You can imagine how the blunder caught on. Thenceforth Bresdin was "Chien-Caillou" to all his merry companions. And the nickname became the title of Champfleury's story (admired by Victor Hugo), which made Bresdin, then only twenty, famous in Paris.

After the revolution of 1848 my father left Paris, traveled 240 kilometers on foot with his favorite rabbit, Petiot, in his arms, ending his journey at Toulouse, where he lived for nine years, engraving from morning to night and gardening in his spare moments to provide for us. His lithographs and engravings brought only a meager pittance.

It was at a moment of desperate poverty, in 1854, that Chien-Caillou thought for the first time of emigrating to America with his family. I can assert that the implacable obsession of America that dominated his

life and ours dated from the time of his burning passion for Chingachgook. To the literary fascination of Fenimore Cooper's book there must, however, be added the pictorial revelation he received from the exhibits of Catlin's circus. This American showman, whose exotic paintings the poet Baudelaire praised in his *Curiosités Esthétiques*, had attracted my father to the land of the Redskins by his magnificent exhibition of Iowa Indians in 1845 as much as Cooper had done by the adventures of all his heroes. "Toulouse, 1854"—the year in which my father first spoke his desire to go to America—is precisely the dating of his two important etchings, *Indian Warrior on Horseback* and *Cortège*, a procession of Indian chiefs with lances and feather headdresses against a background of mountains.

The little emigrant colony was to sail to America from Bordeaux in 1855. Like Christopher Columbus, Bresdin had to struggle to reach his New World. He labored on copper or stone. But the lithographic stone was no gold-mine; it did not yield enough for Bresdin to buy equipment and passage for five emigrants aside from his wife and little daughter. The fascinating voyage was put off only till some later date. When it has been granted to an artist—and to such an artist as Bresdin—year after year to "see" his Promised Land from afar with inward eyes, he believes that the God of the Righteous will one day permit him to cross the Red Sea, dry-shod if need be, to reach it. The hour of departure may not have been set, but the voyage is *decided upon*.

Woe unto him who would judge an artist's dream, above all, the dream of one who has attained the artist's kind of sainthood—contentment, even joy, in absolute destitution. I shall be wary of speaking other than reverently, though with some degree of terror, of my father's sacred "curse," the wish to return to Nature—to Nature undefiled—in order to achieve the happiness of an independent existence on untrammelled soil, to reflect in the ecstatic thank-offering of Art the work of God, where it has kept its original splendor and goodness. To Bresdin himself, then, I leave the honor and responsibility of the confession. In the following letter, written at Toulouse on September 15, 1854, a child of Adam, impatient to save his soul, longs for the forests of the Terrestrial Paradise:

. . . if only for a moment I might forget all the bitterness of my situation, which, thank Heaven, is physically at least not the worst—which goes to show the precariousness of our human nature. Meanwhile, the *vision of America, of the new country where freedom*

*and independence can be won by work*, has already refreshed me somewhat . . . bringing me closer again to that *undefiled nature which came but yesterday, so to speak, from the Creator's hands*—savagely magnificent nature which offers you in her luxuriant and creative vastness an image of that future regeneration which religion so earnestly urges upon faith. Oh, to be able, face to face with Nature, to develop body and soul, to develop the precious gifts that God has given you without becoming brutalized by tasks that are always mean and, too often, foul and dishonorable—subjecting the mind to tyranny, deceit, duplicity and power, as we see so many *fallen* creatures do for the sake of earning a living! That is something that can rouse to envy, something that can move a man to whom a flexible back and the wish and power to deceive are faults as unknown as they are impossible. I know that there are many who will tell me that I should hunt with the wolves—but my opinion is that it is better to kill them or run away from them if fortune or the posture of events will not allow us to muzzle them. . . .

But how was he to escape, to emigrate? Toulouse was not a seaport, but Bordeaux was close by. From colonization enterprises and navigation companies he obtained information. "Among our five Christopher Columbuses," he confided to a friend, "alas! not even a penny to pay passage in Charon's bark from this world to the next. Meanwhile, I had made arrangements—O miracle of eloquence and sound information—for passage at 130 francs for myself and my four associates. But I have not been able to obtain any further concession, which means that I am obliged to work at lithography to get together my passage-money and probably that of the others who make up the total of five demanded by the company. The only other alternative would be to set out alone or with Pastare or poor Pologne, or even with both of them." It appears, then, to have been a question of establishing a small "colony." Who were the four other colonists? I know of only three: the above mentioned Pastare, a carpenter, and "poor Pologne," a Slavic wanderer who had one day arrived mysteriously in Toulouse, asking for help—from whom? From one even poorer than himself, from Job, from my father!

My father lived in Bordeaux from 1860 to 1870. It seems that he wished to be near a port, awaiting the miraculous day on which some ship should carry him to the new continent where, as a new man, a *colonist*, he could bring happiness to us all by realizing that dream of

artists whom civilization has disappointed—to behold the virgin forest. In 1866 he felt able to tell his friends that now at last he was about to embark for the New World, for New Orleans, where he would settle as a colonist. He organized a lottery with his engravings, lithographs and drawings as prizes; he urged his friends to place his work. The profit from the lottery and from the sale of his work was to pay passage for the entire family, for he had made up his mind not to set out without us. But once again there was not money enough. And then my father fell very ill.

The war of 1870 found him in Paris, where he had gone to be treated at the Hôpital Necker; he was threatened with blindness and suffered from rheumatism. When he was cured, he sent for us to join him in the capital. But how to lodge us safely during the bombardment? He hid us in one cellar after another. But the horrors of war had sickened him, and though he was an ardent patriot and republican, when the Commune appeared he joined the forces of the Communists. How, after 1871, did he succeed in escaping the firing-squads, imprisonment in New Caledonia, or the hulks? It was a miracle. But how hard it was for him to earn a living! In Paris, anyone even suspected of having taken part in the Commune was infallibly reported to employers, and there was no work for him. Terrible years of darkness, retreat and despair!

This was the moment of a great event—an event too great for people as humble as we were. Bresdin received an inheritance! Was it from his side of the family, or from my mother's? I do not know. But it was the first money to come to us which was not earned by my father's eyes—those poor engraver's eyes which were still troubling him. A statement made to me by Odilon Redon, in whom my father confided, is my authority for this inheritance. I knew nothing about it.

His pockets full of money, what was Bresdin's first thought? It was to translate into action the dream which had obsessed him all his life—to get away at last, to set out for the "Indies." We children, after escaping from the Disasters of the War, had stopped thinking about the other catastrophe with which we had been threatened: the Journey to America. But there was one who had never ceased to think of it. . . . My mother, fearful of the outcome, would often plead with her friends: "I implore you to find him some work that will keep him occupied. Without it, his thoughts go wandering among visions of future splendor."

Unfortunately, the rich royalist who had brought my father from Bordeaux to Paris encouraged him in his dream of an Exodus. I shall not give his name. It was concerning him that I once asked my father:

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"But, father, how can you be so fond of a royalist when you are a republican?" "Yes, yes, child," he answered, "but he is a *fine* royalist."

Then a strange coincidence occurred, proving that a man cannot escape his destiny no matter how dark it may be. Just at this period—and of course Bresdin had to hear of it!—a competition for a design for a bank note was opened in France by the United States of America.\*

Bresdin believed he saw the finger of Fate. He buckled down immediately, worked like "an unemancipated Negro," as he was fond of saying, and produced a design which he entered in the competition.

I shall copy the conscientious description of it made by the Dutch expert Landweer: "At first sight, it is not very attractive and the composition seems rather loose—a common occurrence in notes of this sort. But on closer examination the impression is more favorable and delightful details become evident; in fact they are present in great number and they are lithographed with an unheard-of delicacy. Of particular beauty are the male figures on either side of the medallion which frames the well-studied portrait of the President, the large number of fruits, flowers and heads, which doubtless represent abundance, and the still-life of books and children; in the latter, and particularly in the left-hand group, we find the hand of the draughtsman again."

Chien-Caillou, Prince of the Poor, summoned by destiny to design a bank note! His design was judged the best. There was a handsome prize. In addition, the United States would pay the expenses of a trip to America so that the prize-winner could personally supervise the printing of the notes.

Americans do things quickly. Almost immediately, Bresdin was sent for by the Paris manager of the competition, who promptly and courteously presented him with a ticket.

"But—but I am not alone," Bresdin said. "I have a wife."

"Naturally we will give you a ticket for your wife. Here it is."

"But—I have children too."

"How many?"

My father hesitated, a little ashamed of the number.

"Six." (Four daughter and two sons.)

The manager succeeded in suppressing a smile. With the same courtesy he gave my father tickets for all the members of the little caravan.

The hour of departure! It had been talked of so often, and so often

\*The history of the Bresdin bank note, referred to also by others, is still something of a mystery. A recent clue indicates that the note was designed for a Canadian bank.

Fate had denied it to us, that we could not believe in it. Our downcast friends likewise refused to believe. Yet it was to be: our father and the circumstances demanded it. The Bresdins, whose number had been augmented by the arrival of a baby some months before, were to set out for the New World. What was my father to do there—a man of fifty, head of a family, recently discharged from the hospital, and still suffering from eye-trouble, heart-trouble, lung-trouble, and rheumatism? First he would superintend the printing of the bank note, and then clear ground, plant, struggle, colonize!

His preparations, consequently, were rather those of a colonist than those of an artist. Over a thousand francs worth of seeds—a thousand francs was a small fortune in those days—were sent to our house from Vilmorin's, where my father had hurried to buy them. He conceived and executed everything on a large scale. He ordered a dozen pairs of shoes for each of the children.

"But, Bresdin," my mother reminded him, aghast, "the children's feet will have grown before these quantities of shoes are worn out."

But common sense—which imagination had not stopped to consult—spoke, as always, too late. My father, who usually sulked when reproached with his lack of it, was too exultant to be angry.

There was a last lunch for our friends—a sort of banquet of the brotherhood of the poor assembled to say farewell, or rather *au revoir*. The lunch was at our house—because we had money. The dishes were set out on the boxes which contained our personal possessions and the agricultural implements. How many of those boxes there were! After the lunch my father's friends, who had taken up a collection among themselves, presented him with a parting gift. He never wore a watch, so a watch was their choice. Perhaps it was meant to remind him, even as he set forth, of the hour of return. Deeply moved, father promised that he would never part with it.

We embarked at Hâvre-de-Grace on the *St.-Laurent*. The crossing took twenty-six days, which my father spent admiring the sea, the clouds, and the crew. The sailors had a great respect for him because of the dimensions of his packing-cases, in which he had also placed the furniture he had made with his own hands and the life-giving press.

One of the crew developed a great reverence for Bresdin. He confided to him that he had lost his father, who looked extraordinarily like Bresdin, and he bemoaned his lack of a portrait of the dead man, of anything that would serve him as a reminder. My father had heard enough; with great difficulty he had his boxes opened and succeeded in



unearthing a photograph of himself which he presented to the sailor. "Poor fellow," he said to us, "wanting a picture of his father to carry near his heart over the waves!"

How often I found my father at bow or stern or on the bridge silently contemplating the sea! He was like a hermit, happy at having found the desert at last. But—as you may have observed in his marines—my father, who was born on the banks of the Loire and who had lived in Bordeaux, had less of an eye for the sea than for ports. He evoked his ships and long-boats and barges at the moment when they come into contact with the land, tying up at a wharf or hauled out on the sand. Look at the well-known etching which he significantly entitled *My Dream*. It is the end of a voyage; the sailors are tying the sails to the yards; the great ships seem happy to have passed through estuaries or canals into the very heart of the town. Their hulls lie close to the houses; their masts and topmasts and rigging stand against the sky in company with peaked gables and church spires. Of course, those were ships and ports of the Gothic Age.

We landed in New York. My father earned a splendid honorarium, liberally paid by the Bank for supervising the printing of the Bresdin bank note. That went on for a year. When the new bank note was issued, the long steel plate was returned to the artist. The engraving had been left intact on one side; on the other it was effaced to avoid any danger of counterfeits.

From New York my father took us to Philadelphia—for what reason I do not remember. But neither New York nor Philadelphia—ultra-modern capitals with huge department stores and docks—had enough picturesque attraction to hold the romantic wanderer.

I am sure that my mother advised our return to France. The United States would have paid our return passage, and the money that the bank note had brought in made up a small capital, still intact, which would have allowed us to regain an honorable footing in France.

But the land waiting to be cleared? And the virgin forest? Where were they to be found in the New World which we had so hardly won?

My father took us to Canada.

## PAUL BRESLIN ON HIS FATHER

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY ROBERT B. JOHNSON

AS YOU SAY, CHIEN-CAILLOU BY CHAMPFLEURY IS A FANCIFUL absurdity and has no truth in it save my father's surname. The sculptor Bourdelle considers this book a springboard, of use to Champfleury for personal publicity, while treating a too modest, but genuine, artist. De Montesquiou, in his book *L'Inextricable graveur*, puts things back in their proper place, but he embellishes a great deal, and lacking precise information, often relates things which have happened only in his imagination as artist and novelist.

The truth is very simple: my father, son of a tanner at Ingrand (Loire-Inférieure), where I have often gone myself, left his home because he wanted to paint and sketch rather than become a tanner. Since he had no means of support, in order to gain skill he did all kinds of jobs for artists, and he was at last able to contribute to journals of satire and caricature in Paris. But little by little, he bought copper, stone, paper, built a press out of wood for himself and made several drawings and engravings. Did he like the bohemian life or did he just put up with it? At any rate, he lived for a long time in a garret, it is true, with a rabbit named "Petiot," his companion in misfortune. Since the tale about Petiot was often, even during my father's lifetime, the subject of conversation, I am certain of its truth.

He went to Toulouse. How? Why? I don't know. Afterward he was in Albi where he met my mother. Then on to Bordeaux, back to Toulouse and finally to Paris. He entered a contest for the designing of vignettes on American bank notes, won first prize, and the whole family—he, my mother, four daughters, two boys—left for America; he was convinced he would return rich (in 1872).

For a year he undoubtedly received good stipends, but having no sense about practical matters beyond the realm of his art, forever the visionary, he unsuccessfully undertook the manufacture of gardening tools made out of a type of wood he had noticed, whose branches seemed suitable.

After Quebec, Montreal, Philadelphia, and while we were in New York, we were very happy that Victor Hugo, interested in my father, did his best to get us back home to France. For my father perhaps never

would have been able to accumulate enough money to buy tickets for eight persons!

Back in France and as poor as ever, one of my sisters and I, the youngest members of the family, were sent to a boarding school—thanks still to Victor Hugo.

My father then withdrew to Sèvres to a big mansard workroom twenty meters long, where he set up a studio near a large bay window and built himself a bed. He left the rest of the room to some birds, a few chickens and rabbits, that roamed about freely and inspired him, he said, because they gave him the impression of being in a forest. According to the season he stayed in his studio or returned home. In fact it was there that he died of pneumonia.

He made many friends among painters and novelists, but he preferred his isolation, out of pride never soliciting anything, and never being in any sense aware of the necessities of life—but constantly in search of a movement or a line.

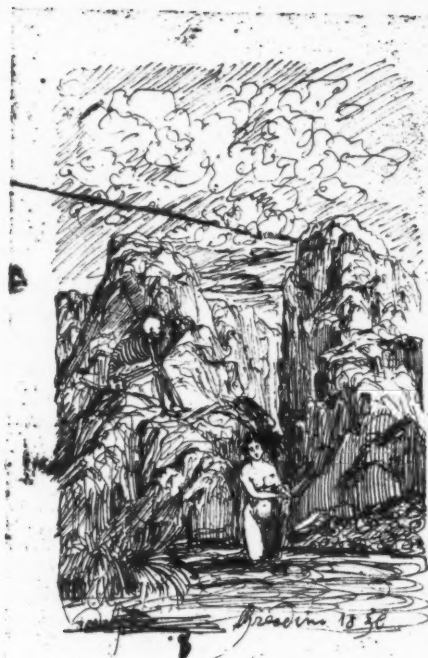
He used to dream of living on one of the barges going up and down the Loire, which usually have one or two chambers, a dining room, and a semblance of a small garden on the deck. Some of these barges of the type my father often reproduced are still on the Loire.

That is all that I can verify as exact about my father, who was often called the Edgar Poe of engraving.

A raw onion, salt and bread, such was his meal—or a smoked herring that he would share with us, keeping for himself the backbone and head portions which he had grilled, the whole washed down with water from an old pitcher in which he kept a few nails and some tar to disinfect the water. . . .

I am taking advantage of your patience, but I am doing so only to comply with your request for information.

Please accept his son's gratitude and best wishes for your interest in the artist.



DEATH AND THE BATHER Drawing  
Actual size c. 1865 Anon. Coll.

*The Massachusetts Review*

dedicates these pages to J. B. NEUMANN in recognition of his great efforts to make the works of Bresdin known in America and throughout the world.

Baudelaire's letter to Gautier is printed in the *Œuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire: Correspondance Générale*, III (Paris, 1948), 273-4. Claude Roger-Marx's "Bresdin l'Étrange" appeared in *L'Œil*, May 15, 1955. The passages by Odilon Redon are from his *A Soi-même* (Paris, 1922). Marius-Ary Leblond's "Bresdin in America" is a chapter from an unpublished work, "The Real Life of Rodolphe Bresdin, as Told by his Daughter." The letter, "Paul Bresdin on his Father," was written to P. A. Regnault on May 18, 1929.

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*The full-size reproduction of Bresdin's greatest work, The Good Samaritan, here folded in, may be procured unfolded by sending \$1.00 to The Massachusetts Review. Givers of gift subscriptions to the Review will receive the reproduction free of charge.*



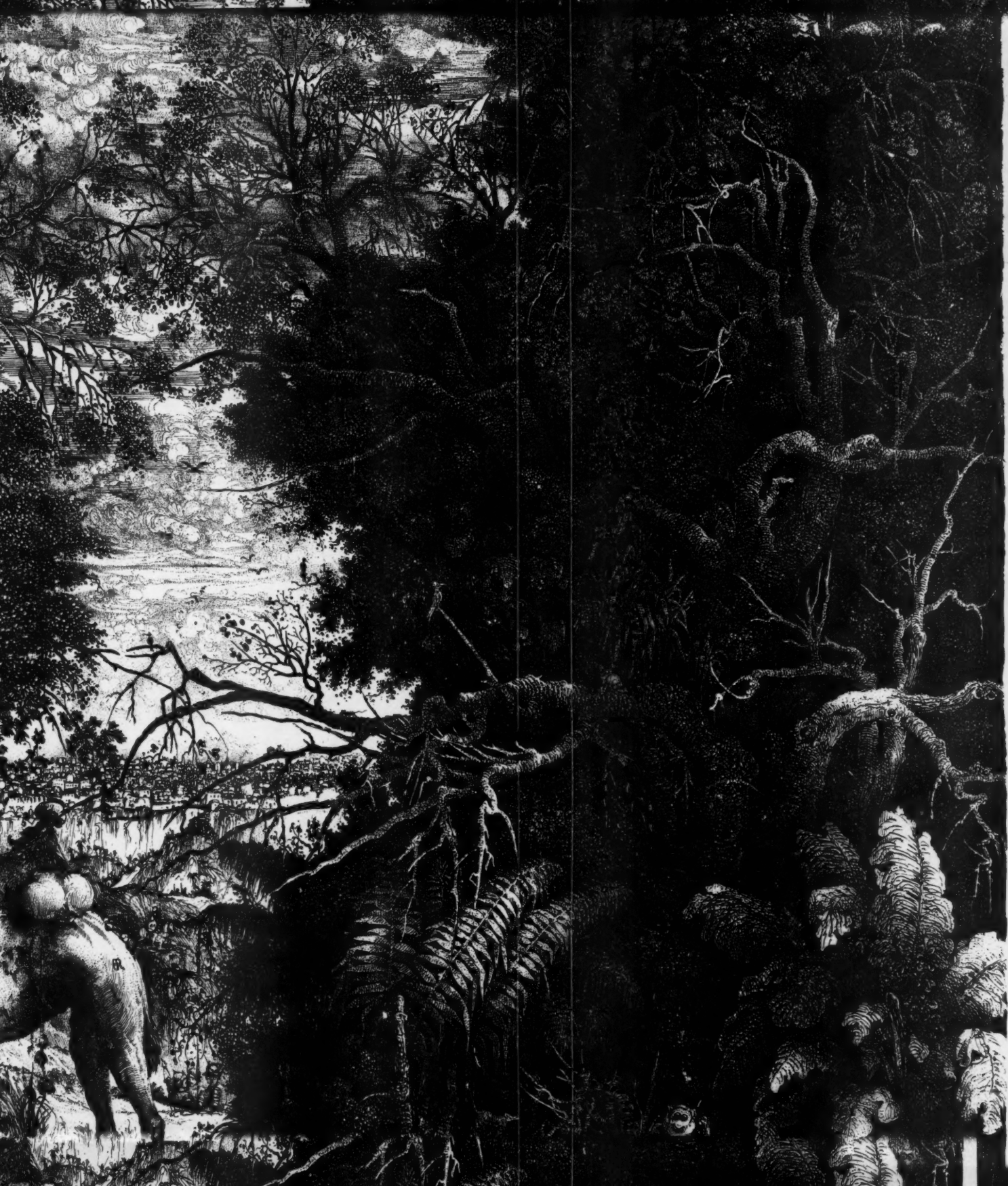
















Rodolphe Bresdin THE GOOD SAMARITAN Lithograph Actual size 1861 N.49



D

## *Deborah Austin*

### FLAUTIST

Snatching a breath,  
he falls straight out of air  
into another world, whose element,  
pure and untroubled, closes round his head,  
and he is native there.

We trail our hands  
in that clear stream, but cannot live in it;  
he only is at home there, where all law  
and all compulsion cannot bind, but free—  
moving obedience that is not enslaved  
inexorably toward felicity.

Who would not choose,  
if it were optional, to linger there,  
serenely, in that labyrinthine maze  
whose issue is the end of all delight?  
Love is the force, and harmony the bride,  
and chaos waits outside.

## *Robert Bagg*

### LULLABY AND AUBADE ON A HOT NIGHT

Because you drowse and breathe, your hair piles  
Over, cottons to your ears  
So you don't hear rain, or feel the hills  
Cradling the storm's thunders,

And since your eyes are firmly closed  
Down to their slim horizons  
Your blonde eyelands shall be exposed  
To no shock but the sun's,

Which won't come for five hours yet.  
Sleep toward this wish of my arms,  
Sally, as if in a hammock, sweat  
And swing in the moon's arms

Till damp sleep sweetens your waking  
And your eyes go wide as suns yawn.  
May moisture cool your skin, and cling  
Your fullness to your nightgown

As your life, steeped in dreams all night,  
From breasts and fingertips, clears  
Away all sorrows but this sunlight  
Failing our day-dreaming stars.



T

BALLAD: NAUSICAA

Am I such a temporary girl,  
So thin and uninspiring  
And so lightly weight his heart  
That he may leave me, and still sing?

Could he have sailed so facilely  
If mine were mortal spells,  
If passage through my eyes  
Were dangerous as Dardanelles?

Oh all I owned were minor faults  
Like a tongue too warm and free,  
Like lips touched rich with salt  
That touched him to his journey.

His journey never was inspired  
By anything practical,  
Nothing that could be cured  
By my being beautiful.

He wasn't carried away by triumph.  
And though her eyes might purr with azure  
Urges, surely no sultry nymph  
Gave him more pleasure.

Those things that I feared early  
Turned pliant as my limbs.  
Like a hair across his eye,  
I lay golden, I lay slim.

But he steered clear of lazy olives,  
The hyacinths, and me  
And my linen-voiced loves  
Toward the longwinded sea.

I must have made him restless  
With my eyes drowsy always,  
While pale turmoils of my dress  
Unnerved him like white lies.

He feared this was too perfect,  
Lived only on the tongue,  
That we'd tire of its effect  
As words tire in a song.

He said I held no harshness,  
No iron rhythms to master.  
He'd be too mild, unless  
He made love to disaster.

Maybe I won't be soft and sure  
When you sail off the water,  
Maybe perfection can be cured.  
Maybe, sailor, I'll be bitter.

Were these eyes not magnificent  
To fool, this frightened hair  
No trick to soothe and circumvent,  
My thighs nothing to beware?

Whatever sleeps inside me  
Dreamed too long under your hand.  
Words tire in my song,  
And I am lonely in a sunny land.

## B. Colt

### FESTIVALS OF AUTUMN

Already fires return to the plain with molten jellies in the sea  
and the ice-orchids of cirrus.

Humid fireflies leave the abandoned railroad tracks and cellars.  
Tomorrow St. Luke's summer and the stormless hills.

From the shore we watch the waves turn molten: toboggans of  
shadow and icy slopes;

A machine denounces the latest manoeuvres; the cities hatch  
their light on the marshes,

And the streams of silence miss and hook into space.

Bearing another year—going like torpedoes

With haywire Leonids among starry signs

Lucky as the Horsehead and an ace of spades,

The cumulus boiling in starlight.

### BEACH

*Sterna hirundo* or stormy petrel?

On the naked hearth the spine fused with mica,

And here death sparkles like a chisel.

## *Beth Bentley*

### TO AN ARTIST WHO LOST HIS LIFE'S WORK IN A FIRE

Autumn bestowed her honors early;  
statues blazed like trees in your garden.  
Now in rich compost you smoulder,  
pit, kernel, nugget, nubbin.

Sift it and stir cold mornings when  
a taut mind herded to their places  
correct themes, a wrist accomplished  
demivolts upon a textured dais,

eye over all, brother to bone.  
Weep, then, weep. Job wept. And mourn;  
"a tear is an intellectual thing."  
Be afraid; but prize your burn:

what withers fruit and makes leaves drop,  
heals sores, seals scars; and, all naked,  
seamless pip, you are that most  
comely orb, a polished seed.

## MOTHS

My son swats flies and moths,  
he steps on ants, and with more bra-  
vado than courage sends to watery deaths  
small spiders down the hoarse craw  
of the drain, during his baths:

all without malice or anger,  
simply a disinterested interest in stop-  
ping a movement or a noise, to clear  
a space; or to explore the gap  
between life and death. There

is true innocence  
in this cheerful murder. My  
husband had a saintly mother, who once  
lifted a monstrous spider gently  
in her Irish hands

and carried him to a window  
where she let him drop. Such faith;  
having seen the worst, still to avow  
the best. That woman didn't fear death.  
My faith has a flaw.

In fear of dirt, disease,  
I track down flies and clean my cat  
with deadly poisons to suffocate her fleas.  
Armed with a rag, I lie in wait  
for moths, the small brown species,

silvery-brown and grey,  
that, when I, like the little tailor,  
kill seven at one blow, eddy,  
scatter and float like leaves, their powder  
on my fingers, dry.

I garner them from wall  
and window-sill, four wings stiff  
and fluted, dust shedding a mild sparkle;  
mildly patterned, too, as dif-  
fident as nuns. Still,

I must aim my blow,  
and be trapped by my intent.  
Knowledgeable and afraid, between the two  
I hover, the child and the saint.  
I mourn, and kill my foe.

### TEMPLE OF THE MUSES

What did they feel, those twenty-odd  
school children, herded in a covey  
off the bus by a resigned female,  
into that square gray vault? Their voices  
blenched in silence palpable  
as flesh. They stood in the high cei-

linged foyer, dripping snow on the tile,  
at liberty, warm in an alien ocean.  
Could they smell it? Varnish and oil,  
turpentine, dust, the harsh brown  
scent of centuries, the cold  
odor of marble, rotting canvas?

Glints of gold melted their eyes;  
they breathed-in red and verd antique.  
No childish voice dared slice the hush.  
Suddenly they perceived ancestral halls  
where elders soundlessly commune.  
They confronted their inheritance.

I was there, too, an awkward ten,  
teeth chattering with more than cold.  
I lost the others and wandered those  
strange everglades, grove after grove;  
found my own kind, recognition's  
needle adamant at the crux.

The mind forgets. The soul seems cached  
away. But I have lucky days;  
a kind recurring dream beds me,  
where, in some park, I follow paths,  
come to an unlovely but beloved  
structure and, warm in its presence, enter.

Behold, the vaulted room: window-  
less, cloistered in silence, unpeopled,  
it endures. Rose, blue and gilt  
tingle the lining of my lids.  
I levitate on turquoise neck-  
lace, copper pot, brown statues, coins;

patinas of ivory and jade  
tilt senses overlaid by the rust  
of haggling. A debt-free tan-  
gible, this memory renews me,  
as absolutes, gold-framed, stare down,  
taut smiles stretched open as a hand.



*Kai Nielsen*

## Dewey's Conception of Philosophy

THERE ARE FASHIONS in philosophy as there are fashions in clothes, and John Dewey, like the long skirt, is no longer in fashion. People in education departments still fight about Dewey's philosophy of education, and neo-conservatives like Kirk and Hallowell or Marxists like Selsam and Wells blame Dewey for most of the ills and muddles of our cultural and intellectual life, but, for the most part, Dewey and the philosophical approach he initiated have, temporarily at least, passed from the center of interest.

True, Dewey has become an American institution; he is the subject of frequent doctoral dissertations—particularly at Columbia University—and he is regular fare in courses in American intellectual history. But like Sinclair Lewis in literature, Dewey, in philosophy, no longer captures the imagination.

The *avant-garde* among the professional philosophers in the United States, the Commonwealth countries and Scandinavia have centered their interest around what is variously called linguistic philosophy, conceptual analysis or analytic philosophy. Sometimes this takes the form of a keen interest in symbolic logic and the application of its formal techniques to philosophical problems. The technical work of Russell, Carnap and Tarski are the classical models for this approach. More recently, a kind of non-formal linguistic or conceptual analysis, utilizing natural languages, has come to the center of attention. This approach focuses attention not only on the uses of language in science and mathematics but also on its uses in law, morality, literature and religion. Broader in scope and more human-

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istically oriented, it has engaged the talents of many younger English-speaking philosophers. At present it is perhaps the dominant philosophical approach among technical philosophers in the English-speaking world. Wittgenstein, Moore, Wisdom, Ayer, Ryle and Austin are the major figures here.

On the Continent and in Latin America these linguistic philosophies have had little influence—there existentialism, phenomenology and, in certain institutional circles, Marxism and Thomism have held court—but Dewey's influence in these places has also been slight.

Professional philosophers apart, linguistic philosophy has not been—at least until recently—a major force in American intellectual life. As the influence of Dewey, James, Royce and Santayana waned among the educated public, the slack was not taken up by the rising forms of analytic philosophy; instead the existentialist-type philosophies of the Crisis Theologians, Niebuhr, Buber and Tillich, and then later the thought of the existentialists themselves, caught the imagination of the intellectuals. To the morally perplexed, religiously confused and perhaps personally bedeviled onlooker, linguistic analysis, with its scrupulous concern for the complexities of ordinary language or its obsession with the construction of artificial, logically perfect “languages,” seemed remote, irrelevant to the problems of the age and the miseries, apprehensions, and longings of man. People in moral quandaries desperately wanted to know what is *good* and what they *ought* to do and not just whether “good” or “ought” is definable or indefinable, simple or complex, natural or non-natural. To these people such persistent philosophical questions were of no interest at all except where answers to such questions were thought to lead, directly or indirectly, to moral wisdom, to actual knowledge of good and evil. The existentialist attitude that “all useful philosophizing must be an attempt to work out a personal way of life” seemed to have a relevance that linguistic analysis could not possibly have to the honest seeker after truth who wanted to live authentically.

Though Dewey also wrote about “the problems of men,”

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his philosophy was often thought to be as unrewarding as analytic philosophy while lacking its distinctive clarity. It seemed to many—perhaps because they were better acquainted with what Niebuhr said about Dewey than with what Dewey said himself—that Dewey's philosophy was an expression of a shallow, naively optimistic, scientific faith. Dewey, blithely ignorant of the perversities and ambivalences of the "underground man" in us all, muddleheadedly thought he could save our souls with social science. Dewey, to many a cultural hipster, is synonymous with softness, confusion, and innocent liberal utopianism, unwilling or unable to come to grips with those dark forces of our social and personal life dug up by Marx, Freud and Pareto.

To many a professional philosopher, on the other hand, Dewey is hardly a philosopher at all. As a critic of prior philosophies he often substitutes an irrelevant genetic analysis for logical analysis of the difficulties in these theories. His accounts of "truth," "meaning," "knowledge" and "value," these philosophers contend, are thoroughly unrigorous. Dewey sings songs in praise of science and the scientific method, without any real understanding of the complexities of science. He writes about logic and semantics without real familiarity with or careful consideration of the techniques or puzzles of the symbolic logician. Worst of all, he hardly raises genuine philosophical questions at all, but substitutes a kind of vague sociology of knowledge for philosophical analysis, uncritically assuming just those very logical or conceptual points that are of the greatest philosophic interest.

There is some truth in these allegations against Dewey, but for the most part they are stereotyped and unfair, and not based on any sympathetic study of his work. Philosophy has come a long way since Dewey's germinal ideas developed, and the cultural scene is very different from the one which Dewey and Tufts faced when, in 1908, they published their text, *Ethics*. I am not a Deweyite, and I find the approach of Wittgenstein and Moore far more enlightening, even for thinking about the foundations of morality, than Dewey's, but I also find Dewey's

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approach and his very different conception of philosophic inquiry enlightening. It is my belief that we have a lot to learn from Dewey yet. This is particularly true for those who are perplexed about the place of reason in morality and society, for those who, like Kathleen Nott, think "that the only valid ethical statements are personal statements—of *my* experiences, *my* realizations, *my* choices and preferences"—and for those ethical absolutists, like Tillich and Vivas, who believe that you can only discover the *ground* of "the ethical" in some non-scientifically apprehended, logically inexpressible, "ontological realm."

I should like to elucidate Dewey's distinctive conception of philosophy, to contrast it with some more dominant approaches and to show its relevance to "vitally important" topics.

### I

The word "philosophy" is vague, and it has undergone a complex historical development. Dewey's conception of the proper office of philosophy is unique. As commentators like Sidney Hook have pointed out, Dewey gives the very conception of philosophy itself a radical development—a development that is, in part, responsible for some of the misunderstandings of his thought.

If we ask the "plain man"—the philosophically untutored man—what philosophy is, he might well reply: "A man's philosophy is, well, you know, his standards, the things he will really try to live by or stand up for. All of us, whether we know it or not, have a philosophy." The "plain man's" uncoached response is to the point. There certainly is a standard use of the word "philosophy" that links it with man's basic beliefs about how he ought to live and die. To ask for a man's philosophy, in this sense, is to ask for his standards, his basic moral and intellectual commitments. But if we settle on such a usage, philosophy gets perilously close to religion, and when we note this, we usually hasten to add that a man's philosophy is his rationally articulated or articulatable convictions. Religion, it is fashionable to say, expresses our ultimate concern. But the

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objects of such concern, it is said, can be grasped only by faith, and crucial religious directives are allegedly given to us only by Revelation. The honest man, aware of his own misery, apprehends God with his heart; that is to say, as a knight of faith, he has an immediate, instinctive, unreasoned apprehension of God. But this so-called apprehension is, as Pascal and Kierkegaard well knew, not a "philosophical apprehension." Philosophy, they argued, could not possibly give us such truths, but such "knowing with the heart" was literally the way of faith; man driven to despair throws himself on God's grace. "Philosophy," even in its most primitive uses, means something very different from this. And, if like Jaspers, we must speak of a "philosophical faith," it remains a rational faith; a man's philosophy consists in the standards he is willing to defend intellectually.

But this primitive use of "philosophy" is not adequate for the philosopher. As Dewey himself points out, philosophy has been generally regarded as "an attempt to comprehend—that is to gather together the varied details of the world and of life into a single inclusive whole. . . ." This rationalist impulse, which was at its strongest in his Objective Idealist mentors and opponents, Bradley, Bosanquet and Royce, is a deep-seated one with philosophers. Philosophers have desired as complete an outlook upon experience as is possible. But this drive for generality is not just a drive for some very general descriptive or categorial features of the world. Instead, this drive for generality is linked with a *Weltanschauung* that will, hopefully, give us wisdom. Again, as Dewey puts it, "Whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom which would influence the conduct of life." In Greece the ancient schools of philosophy were also ways of living, and although the quests for a way of life of Christian philosophers like Augustine or Aquinas were supported by what seemed to them a far more secure base, i.e., the Christian Faith, philosophy even for them was also envisaged as affording an additional kind of wisdom that was essential to the highest forms of the good life.

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In the great systems of rationalist thought and in scholastic thought today, philosophical statements are supposed to be very general statements about the nature of the world. Through Spinoza's massive system, for instance, we are supposed to be able to find the way to human freedom. Analytic philosophy has called in question this traditional position. It has sharply scrutinized the traditionalist's claim that philosophy gives us some very general truths about value, knowledge and being. It questions not only the legitimacy of philosophy as *Weltanschauung* but also of philosophy as a kind of "first science" or "super-science." We see here a complex conceptual development; we are now far from the primitive uses of "philosophy." "Philosophy" is indeed a term for many different activities.

Something more needs to be said about this development. As Ryle puts it, the clue to the difference between philosophy and science is the realization that while "science produces true (and sometimes false) statements about the world; philosophy examines the rules or reasons that make some statements (like those of good scientists) true-or-false, and others (like metaphysicians' statements) nonsensical." Philosophy, that is to say, becomes analysis: it talks about the uses of moral, religious, legal or scientific discourse. Philosophy no longer directly talks about the world but talks about the talk about the world. (It should be noted, parenthetically, that Ryle, Wittgenstein, Toulmin, Winch and others have come to say that this distinctively philosophical talk is also, *in a sense*, about the world; that is, we talk about the *uses* of the word "cause" or "morality," not just about the *word* "cause" or "morality." But this kind of talk is still very different from common sense or scientific assertions. It is conceptual rather than allegedly substantive in the way some "philosophy of being" would be. In understanding the jobs these words are characteristically employed to do, we come to understand the forms of life, the general categories, with which we organize and understand our lives. As Peter Winch has said, "to give an account of the meaning of a word is to describe how it is used; and to describe how it is used is to describe the social intercourse into which it enters."

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And in this way philosophical talk about the uses of talk is also talk about reality.)

Both in the rationalist and the analytic phase of the development of the concept, philosophy tends to be increasingly shut off from its earlier, more primitive, conception as a normative statement of one's clarified standards. Among the linguistic analysts Anthony Quinton and G. J. Warnock have felt that the most crucial contribution of contemporary linguistic philosophy was not the elimination of metaphysics but the elimination of *Weltanschauung* conceptions from philosophy. Even in examining moral or religious uses of language the analyst must be neutral. His task is completed when he has given a sufficiently full description of the uses of the discourse in question in order to dispel perplexity over the actual functioning of our language in certain philosophically crucial areas. For example, the man who thinks no man is ever really free if determinism is true or that no inductions are really ever more than expressions of animal faith is in need of philosophical help. The philosopher dispels the philosophical fog by making it clear to the perplexed man what he and all other native users of the language mean by saying "You were free to come to the lecture or to stay home," or "It is as certain, as anything can be, that the sun will rise tomorrow." Thus, the philosopher is not to change the world or make any normative recommendations at all. Philosophy leaves everything as it is, but it gives us a clearer view of the actual operation of, say, scientific and moral discourse. When this job is done the philosopher's task is completed.

Dewey's approach contrasts with this. He has insisted that concern with *Weltanschauung* is not just some extraneous element that has clung on from the days in which "a philosophy" and "a way of life" were nearly synonymous. These are genuine concerns and should remain an integral part of the very office of philosophy. He would agree with Ryle and the logical empiricists that it is up to the scientists to explain to us what the world is like, that statements that so and so is the case, or that object X has properties of A, B and C, are empirical statements and are confirmable by the techniques of scientific inquiry. But,



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as Dewey pointed out in *Experience and Nature*, there may be also some very general statements (empirical truisms) that are at the very least part of enlightened common sense, assumed by the sciences and yet *not* a part of any scientific discipline. These are statements like "Thinking creatures inhabit the world," "Man is continuous with nature," "There are many colors in the world," "The world changes and there are many different kinds of processes in the world," "The life of each man will come to an end."

Furthermore, when the perplexed man, facing radical social change, asks, "What kind of a world am I going to live in?" or "What is the life of man like on earth?" certain very general empirical statements about "individuality and constant relations, contingency and need, movement and arrest, the stable and the precarious" may well require explicit statement. We may need to remind men that they are social animals with a long period of infantilization, that they are symbolic animals capable of guilt and happiness. These statements are usually not part of any science.<sup>1</sup> But they are not for that matter synthetic *a priori* truths or categorical utterances that must be assumed prior to and independent of any empirical examination. Certainly many of them are held prior to any investigation, and they are hardly the subject of empirical investigation any more than it is a subject for empirical investigation that "There are male students at Yale" or "There are female students at Smith." But such statements are empirically verifiable, and if we discover someone suffering from Cartesian doubts about these statements, we can verify them.

Thus while it is not the case that all statements about the world are scientific, it is the case—Dewey argues—that all genuinely factual claims are verifiable by the empirical testing techniques adopted by the scientists. In that sense it is true that what science cannot tell us mankind cannot know. But Dewey would not assert that these general empirical statements

<sup>1</sup> If it is said that they are basic statements in the social and behavioral sciences, this is only to say in effect that certain empirical truisms are assumed by these sciences. They are hardly laws or hypotheses of these sciences.

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are never philosophical, as Ryle and most of the analytic philosophers have. Very general statements like "Man is a part of nature" and "There are many things in the world" are, under certain conditions at least, philosophical statements and very general empirical statements in Dewey's view. Dewey calls them metaphysical claims.

But in this use of "Metaphysical" there is no collision with the severest logical empiricist or anti-metaphysical analyst, for in such a use "metaphysical statements" are a sub-class of empirical statements. Some logical empiricists might claim that there is little point in uttering such empirical truisms, but they need not—and would not—at all deny that such statements have cognitive meaning. Furthermore, Dewey could reply (as Hook has) that as long as some people keep uttering absurdities like "Everything is really the same" and "Man is pure Spirit seeking to transcend nature," there is a point in coherently marshalling such empirical truisms into a metaphysics or "philosophical anthropology." This is one sense in which Dewey's conception of philosophy "goes beyond" the conception of philosophy prevalent among linguistic analysts.

But there is another way in which Dewey identifies his conception of philosophy with the *Weltanschauung* aspects of earlier philosophic conceptions. Philosophy for Dewey is concerned with social change and conflict. Philosophy is not just a passive reflex of civilization, but is, as Gail Kennedy puts it, "in reality, an argument and a plea for certain social ideals." Or, in Dewey's own words, upon occasion philosophy "proclaims that such and such *should* be the significant value to which mankind *should* loyally attach itself." Philosophy functions as a very general critic of civilization; it functions to convert "such culture as exists into consciousness, into imagination which is logically coherent and is not incompatible with what is factually known." The philosopher should also be the sage, and the need for sages in our culture is by no means, in Dewey's view, a thing of the past. Philosophers must also, upon occasion, be prepared to help instigate social change. A rational man must first understand the world, and it is a philosopher's duty to help

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man understand it, but like Marx, Dewey did not only want to understand the world, but, as an intellectual and as a dedicated man of thought, he also wished to change it.

Philosophy, to Dewey, is not just a neutral analysis of our various forms of discourse. He would not, of course, denigrate clarity, even if he himself is not, upon occasion, nearly clear enough. But Dewey, like H. H. Price, claims that clarity is not enough. We philosophize in order to attain a more rational view of the world in which we live and in order to attain something that has been called the life of reason. In doing this we must perforce not only understand what is meant by "social institution" and "a moral point of view"; we must also assess institutions and moral points of view in terms of certain fundamental rational criteria and bring the criteria of our own time and place under the steady gaze of reflected criticism. Philosophy ought not only to have an elucidating role; it ought also to have an "additive and transforming . . . role in the history of civilization." Philosophy is, in Dewey's celebrated phrase, "a criticism of criticisms."

As we have seen, Dewey did not identify philosophy with science. But science and the scientific procedure of verification play an important, if *negative*, role in the critical function of philosophy. Only the method of science provides an objective *test* for the values which tradition transmits and to which we often feel a deep but ambivalent commitment. This negative office of science is crucial in a philosophical assessment of which among conflicting ideals or practices is the more *worthy* of acceptance.

The use of this scientific criterion for fixing belief will not give us certainty, but it does provide an objective standard for fixing belief. Like Pierce, Dewey is a "fallibilist"; there is no self-evidence in philosophy, there is no intellectual point of view permanently free from the possibility of criticism and revision. But with fallibilism goes a "critical common-sensism"; that is to say, though there can be no privileged heralding of self-evident truths, there is no reason for wholesale or Cartesian philosophical doubt. Though nothing is indubitable, not every-

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thing can be doubted *at once*, and it only makes sense to doubt against a background in which certain statements in the context are not doubted. For there to be doubt, something must count as resolving doubt, and for this to be logically possible, there must be at least some accepted procedural rules and some statements that could count as instances of true or false utterances. Cartesian doubt *cannot be* real doubt at all. Over-all philosophical doubt is a caricature of doubt. Genuine doubts typically emerge where there is some specific break in commonsense or scientific knowledge.

### II

There is another aspect of Dewey's conception of philosophy that needs emphasis here. It is an aspect that is very different from the view of philosophy as analysis, and in some important respects it is like the view of contemporary existentialists.

Dewey emphasized that philosophy was *not* something that was above cultural change or conflict. "Philosophers," he remarks, "are parts of history, caught in its movement; creators perhaps in some measure of its future, but also assuredly creatures of its past." Like Nietzsche, Dewey believed that philosophers must learn to think historically. They ought not to talk of men as if they existed somehow unhistorically, nor of human problems as if they were independent of a definite cultural background. In making generalizations about man's predicament we should be constantly aware of *which* man, *where* and *when* and faced with what specific predicaments. The conflict or supposed conflict between evolution and religion was a problem for the nineteenth-century thinker in a way that it is not a problem today. Squaring one's philosophical beliefs with the certainties of the Christian faith was a problem for Augustine, Scotus and Occam in a way it is not a problem for many philosophers today.

It is indeed true that the so-called perennial philosophies sought, in their quest for certainty, to give a rational articulation to certain necessary truths about an Unchangeable Reality. They sought a conception of the world that would be beyond

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change, that would not, as with the claims of science or Dewey's fallibilistic philosophical beliefs, be subject to possible revision. But, Dewey argues, their philosophies were not in actuality free from the preoccupations of their epoch. So-called "spiritual ideals" expressive of "deep unchangeable truths" were created under conditions in which men were unable to control their environment and lacked the scientific tools to genuinely understand it. Dewey puts it this way: "As long as man was unable by means of the arts of practice to direct the course of events, it was natural for him to seek an emotional substitute." This substitute would give men the feeling of certainty and control. But rational men must come to see there is no such immutable vantage point.

There grew up, in the ancient world, a division between knowing and doing, between genuine knowledge, on the one hand, and practical, everyday belief, on the other. Traditional philosophy was allegedly only concerned with the former. It claimed, in Dewey's words, to "grasp universal Being, and Being which is universal is fixed and immutable." Traditional "philosophy in maintaining its claim to be a superior form of knowledge was compelled to take an invidious and so to say malicious attitude toward the conclusions of natural science." There is, traditional philosophy maintained, a higher *a priori* road, beyond the vicissitudes of mere scientific or practical belief that would enable us to "achieve the ultimate security of higher ideals and purposes." Exercised by these ancient pre-conceptions even contemporary neo-scholastics talk about the so-called transcendental attributes of Being: Truth, Goodness and Reality.

These concerns of traditional philosophy seem far from a concern with a vision of how to order our lives, a concern that Dewey finds essential to any serious conception of philosophy. However, if we look behind the scenes at the cultural context in which these philosophies developed, we can see that such disguised mythical constructions, cloaked as *a priori* but synthetic truths, are intimately linked with some conception of how to live and die. Their underlying, though often masked,

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rationale remains practical. They have their inning where there is no scientific theory available actually to explain puzzling, seemingly inexplicable events. Men seeking a guide to right action and wisdom in a world in which ideals are constantly frustrated, precarious and hard to understand, much less to realize, will very naturally project onto the universe a secure "ontological realm of values" where there is no "discrepancy between existence and value," where evils are a necessary instrumentality in the fulfillment of a mysterious but immutable Good, and where a vision of the Good Life can escape the vicissitudes of habitat and the eccentricities of personality.

Faced with incessant and apparently irremediable moral perplexity, many men, from emotional necessity, project their own deepest desires onto admittedly mysterious "moral realms" in order to escape the relativism of a Montaigne or a Santayana. "After degrading practical affairs in order to exalt knowledge, the chief task of knowledge," for traditional philosophy, "turns out to be to demonstrate the absolutely assured and permanent reality of the values with which activity is concerned." "This is natural," Dewey adds, for "the thing which concerns all of us as human beings is precisely the greatest attainable security of values in concrete existence." The abstract metaphysical claims of traditional philosophy are always in fact—though not necessarily in theory—instrumental to this concern.

Like the existentialists, Dewey would argue that no matter how detached a philosophy may seem from cultural and personal concerns, it is always in fact deeply concerned with the pressing problems of men. It is in effect concerned to answer the Kierkegaardian question: How are we to live and die? What are we to seek as enduring and *worthwhile* ends?

Dewey would probably say that the point of philosophical analysis is to give us some purchase on these questions. Analyses in order to be good analyses must be neutral, but their *point* is never *just* intellectual enlightenment about the uses of our language. Their point is never just to give us a neat catalogue of the forms of meaningful discourse or the categories of thought. Rather, philosophical analysts should seek to dispel perplexity



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about the pressing problems of men. Dewey would certainly sanction Wittgenstein's remark that genuine thinking about personal problems is immeasurably nasty and difficult, yet he would add that if philosophy *only* enables us to think more clearly about "probability," "certainty" and the like, it will not have done all that it can do; for it should also enable us to think more clearly about ourselves, our fellows and the besetting problems of life. In doing this, it will help us to live with greater wisdom.

Traditional speculative philosophers worried about these problems of understanding and about human weal and woe too, but their attempts to meet them were mere rationalizations, giving us only the illusion of a solution. They, indeed, had "a house of theory," but upon analysis "the theory" proved to be no theory at all, but merely a road-block that prevented perfecting genuine *methods* of inquiry and intelligent action.

### III

Dewey deliberately rejects the *a priori* methods of fixing belief characteristic of traditional philosophy. He seeks rather an empirical method for discovering reliable canons of inquiry, which, since ideas are instruments of action, would also give us an adequate method of action to enable us to meet harassing problems of conduct. There is no genuine sense of knowing, for Dewey, that does not involve doing. "Philosophy," in one of Dewey's few stylistically celebrated lines, "revitalizes itself when it ceases to deal with the problems of philosophers and deals with the problems of men." It should be "a method of locating and interpreting the more serious of the conflicts that occur in life and a method of projecting ways for dealing with them." As Peterfreund recently put it, "Dewey believed that philosophy fulfills its function when it provides a methodology for dealing with social problems." Its aim is still to help us attain the life of reason. But Dewey's method for attaining this is distinctive; it involves a genuine departure from traditional philosophy; his basic concern is not to supply us with philo-



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sophical doctrines but with a method of inquiry. As Kennedy remarks, "Dewey's philosophy is not another 'system'; it is the development and application of a method. Whoever understands and accepts Dewey's philosophy does not take over a body of doctrine." *In this respect* Dewey's approach is strikingly like Wittgenstein's.

Philosophy then is a general method of criticism. Criticism occurs whenever we appraise what is observed, enjoyed or desired. We ask if what we desire is really desirable. We criticize when we ask the worth of anything, when we judge. Sensations and emotions supply judgments with its raw material. Judgments are acts of controlled inquiry, not just any reaction to our sense constituents. In judging we seek to discriminate and unify. "Philosophy is and can be nothing but this critical operation become aware of itself and its implications, pursued deliberately and systematically."

But this method of criticism is not primarily to be directed at the problems of the philosophers. Its primary concern is "to clarify, liberate and extend the goods which inhere in the naturally generated functions of experience." Philosophy ought not—and really cannot—create some superior world of "reality" *de novo*, nor can it delve into the secrets of Being, hidden from common sense and science. It has no stock of information or body of knowledge peculiarly its own. "If it does not become ridiculous when it sets up as a rival of science, it is only because a particular philosopher happens to be also, as a human being, a prophetic man of science." Rather than trying to discover eternal truths or allegedly rational "intuitions of Being," philosophy ought to accept and to utilize the best available scientific and commonsense knowledge of its own time and place. Its distinctive purpose "is criticism of beliefs, institutions, customs, policies, with respect to their bearing upon good."

Philosophy has no private source of knowledge. There is no "existential communication" even in Jasper's or Marcel's sense. Nor has philosophy any privileged access to what is good or valuable. "As it accepts knowledge of facts and principles from those competent in inquiry and discovery, so it accepts the goods that

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are diffused in human experience." The discovery of specific goods is the achievement of specific human beings acting, not in any professional capacity, but simply as human beings. It is not the private affair of any elite. Rather, in setting out the method of social criticism, philosophers ought to point out that in appraising values we must of necessity take into cognizance their causes and consequences. Furthermore, in discovering the causes and consequences of what we take to be good actions, scientific knowledge about human nature and about the "matter-of-fact efficiencies of nature" is indispensable.

In achieving this method of social criticism we need, in Dewey's terms, a "general logic of experience as a method of inquiry and interpretation." This "logic of experience" is Dewey's conception of the nature of inquiry.

Inquiry is the process of reflective thinking which is called up in a problematic situation—one in which we have real doubts about what to do. Inquiry always occurs in the context of problem-solving. But thinking takes place in a wider matrix of experience that cannot accurately be called cognitive. It is a matrix in which an organism interacts or transacts with his environment. Ideas or hypotheses are not meaningful when taken from the context in which they operate. Moral ideas, for example, must be examined, if we are really to understand them, in the actual contexts of moral decision; if we do not so examine them we will never understand the logic of moral discourse or fully understand what is desirable. Moral conceptions, if such advice is not heeded, will naturally be "understood" as an ineffable something-I-know-not-what or as the expression of the whims of mortal will.

It is Dewey's hope that this method of inquiry can be pushed from one field to another; it is his hope that it can become the one method of criticism for all the problems of men. The basic problem facing us today is—as he sees it—to extend this method of criticism to morality. Philosophy must show how we can use the sciences of man and the method of scientific inquiry to verify moral statements. Only if this is possible will the feckless effort to construct transcendental moralities cease or

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the feeling that moral utterances are at bottom unrationalizable expressions of preference be overcome; only by such a method of criticism in morality can a rational control of morality be instituted.

Dewey, of course, does not think that science can be a "sacred cow" telling us precisely what to do. Such a belief is too absurd to be seriously entertained. But in giving us some general knowledge of human capacities and wants and in enabling us to discover what are the likely consequences of acting on certain preferences in certain situations, it helps us develop some general reliable guides for a rational morality. To ask for more from a moral philosopher or from anyone else is to ask for something which cannot be had.

Nor does Dewey think that by such a method we are going to save our souls with social science by instituting a utopia in which the dark dilemmas of the human animal will become a thing of the past. Dewey may have been more optimistic than the facts warrant about the potentialities of human growth, though even here, the newly developing sciences of man may be able to do more about those dilemmas than people like Niebuhr suppose. But whether Dewey was too optimistic or not has nothing to do with the correctness of his philosophic method. In fact, only by such a method can we discover whether Dewey was too rosy-minded about human and social potentialities. If Dewey's hopes are illusory they can be discovered to be so. That the application of scientific intelligence to moral problems can, to some extent, relieve the inequalities and quandaries of our time is—in Dewey's words—"the reasonable object of our deepest faith and loyalty, the stay and support of all reasonable hopes." But how successful such a method will be is a matter of trial, not of dogma. And to express such a loyalty is "not to indulge in romantic idealization. It is not to assert that intelligence will ever dominate the course of events; it is not even to imply that it will save us from ruin and destruction. . . . Faith in a wholesale and final triumph is fantastic." Would that Reinhold Niebuhr had read and pondered these words of John Dewey!

## Dewey's Conception of Philosophy

### IV

In this essay I have been more concerned with a sympathetic elucidation of some of Dewey's central ideas than with any attempt at a detailed criticism of them. Instead I have tried, in what for me is an act of love and intellectual piety, to make clear the conception of philosophy held by a great, but much maligned, frequently patronized and terribly misunderstood philosopher.<sup>2</sup> There is no room for detailed criticism here, but I would like to sketch out two central difficulties I find in that part of Dewey's thought I have emphasized.

First, his claim that the scientific method is the sole method for fixing belief seems to me to have serious difficulties, though not such obvious ones as are normally assumed. Connected with difficulties about this view is Dewey's claim—a claim which I believe to be false—that moral statements are empirical statements. It seems to me that Dewey here has not overcome the basic difficulties that both Hume and Mill stated about deriving an ought-statement from an is-statement; nor has he met the kind of difficulties that Moore has brought up with his so-called "naturalistic fallacy."

The basic considerations here are as follows: even if X is desired after an examination of the causes and consequences of desiring X, it still does not follow that X is desirable or X ought to be desired. But to carry out Dewey's program of identifying moral statements as a subspecies of empirical statement

<sup>2</sup> There is, of course, much more to be said of an elucidative nature. Since first writing this essay I have come across an article written by Charles Frankel with a somewhat similar intent. Frankel makes some of the points I make, and he stresses, in a way I did not, the sense in which Dewey had a vision of the order of things that permeated his whole approach. Frankel points out that "Dewey took the daily experience of individuals more seriously than he took anything else, and that he ultimately evaluated everything as an instrument for the enrichment of such experience." Dewey's "ideal was a world in which individuals lived with a sense of active purpose, exerting their individual powers, putting their mark on their environments, sharing their experiences, and making their own contribution to the common enterprises of humanity." (Charles Frankel, "John Dewey's Legacy," *The American Scholar*, XXXIX [Summer, 1960], 313-31.)

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some such identity of meaning must be established. Suppose I ask, "If intelligent people still desire X after reflection on the probable causes and consequences of X or of desiring X, should X be desired, is X really desirable?" In asking this question, I am not asking a logically improper question, as I am if I ask, "If X is the male parent of John, is X John's father?" But if a theory like Dewey's is correct such a question ought also to be logically improper.

Some have defended Dewey at this point by talking about practical judgments, about "problematic situations supplying the ought," or about factual statements being really normative. But such talk does not really help Dewey here. It seems to me, as it seems to Isaiah Berlin, that Morton White's criticisms of Dewey's ethics in White's *Social Thought in America*, though defective in detail, are in principle correct or could be slightly modified so as to be correct and decisive. Sidney Hook and Gail Kennedy have tried hard to meet these criticisms, but I do not believe they have been successful.<sup>3</sup> But this is a long and complicated issue, on which I may well be wrong, and an issue on which it is impossible—as it always is in philosophy—to speak *ex cathedra*.

I shall here briefly consider only a central facet of the issue. If it is said that there is no gap to be closed between the "is" and the "ought," since all hypotheses are really normative or prescriptive, then I would argue that "normative" and "prescriptive" are being used in such a wide way as to obliterate distinctions we frequently make and practically need to make with such conceptions. If "Thousands of people starve each year in Asia" is really as normative as "Thousands of people ought to starve each year in Asia for it lessens the Yellow Menace," then "normative" is being used in such a way that a

<sup>3</sup> See Gail Kennedy, "Science and the Transformation of Common Sense: The Basic Problem of Dewey's Philosophy," *The Journal of Philosophy*, II (May 27, 1954), 313-25, and Sidney Hook, "The Desirable and Emotive in Dewey's Ethics," Sidney Hook, ed., *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom* (New York, 1950), 194-216.

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logical gap emerges between the norm "Thousands of people starve each year in Asia" and the further norm "Thousands of people ought to starve each year in Asia"; for it is certainly intelligible to say that people can starve when they ought not to. We would then have to say we can't derive moral norms from factual psychological norms unless we assume some other moral norm as a premise or as a leading principle, but this is to re-admit, in a cumbersome way, just the distinction between the "is" and the "ought" that Hume, Sidgwick and Moore were trying to enforce. It is simpler and more adequate to assert that we cannot derive from a factual statement alone any normative or moral conclusions at all. If one persists in talking in the complicated way described above, it still remains the case that one cannot derive a moral norm from factual norms. Dewey's dream of making morality into "a science of valuation" has not been fulfilled.

But the admission that Dewey is wrong in claiming that moral statements are empirical statements does not seem to me to be as destructive to his over-all program about the place of reason in ethics as it does to Professor Kennedy and some other close students of Dewey.<sup>4</sup> Rather than betokening a "schizophrenic strain" in our culture, it seems to me to express the logical truth that to evaluate is to evaluate, and to describe is to describe, and to predict is to predict, and that no one of these activities can be reduced to the other. And if to admit this distinction is to be schizophrenic or to create a new "unjustified bifurcation in nature," then I should say, "All rational men ought to be schizophrenic dualists." To evaluate intelligently we must know the facts; to alter the world intelligently we must first know what it is like. To do these things we must be able to distinguish what is the case from what we want to be the

<sup>4</sup> In Frankel's sympathetic account of Dewey's thought, similar questions and reservations occur. Frankel is aware that Dewey's fear of "dualisms" carried him too far, and he points out that "to argue . . . that thinking about values is not independent of thinking about facts is one thing. But to say that a value judgment cannot be distinguished from a judgment about facts is quite another." (Frankel, 325.)

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case and from what ought to be the case. We must not confusedly blur these distinctions into a kind of Hegeloid muck.

However, if we ask how we justify our evaluations, it seems to me that much of Dewey's method of criticism, including much of his use of science, could still be reasonably employed. Dewey's great failure in talking about morality was in not realizing how very different "facts" and "values" are; his great success was in seeing the extensive relevance of scientific knowledge and method to the making of intelligent moral appraisals. What in the name of clarity we must do now, in interpreting Dewey, is to make it perfectly clear we can admit that evaluative utterances are not some form of factual statement without giving up Dewey's insight that to be rational in our moral appraisals we must know the nature of human nature and know intimately what this world of ours is like.

Secondly, I don't think Dewey's conception of philosophic criticism is as clear as it might be. Yet it is an important and fertile idea. This activity of criticism is indeed needed in our culture. As Iris Murdock has recently remarked, after we have, by linguistic analysis of moral and political discourse, made clear its formal features, it is still necessary to argue for some substantive, though very general, normative principles of appraisal. To someone preoccupied with linguistic analysis this may seem a shocking thing to say. A philosopher working out of this tradition would be inclined to exclaim, "Philosophy just isn't equipped to handle this kind of question"—but a belief that philosophy could handle substantive normative issues was at the center of Dewey's thought from the beginning. It does not seem to me to be in conflict with Wittgenstein's approach—except trivially over the extension of the use of "philosophy"—but rather to be a non-conflicting, complementary alternative to it. It seems to me that it is important to do both things, but it is important to keep them clearly distinct in a way Dewey did not.

Dewey's ideas about philosophy as criticism are suggestive but vague. Philosophy, for him, should assess institutions and moral points of view in terms of certain fundamental rational



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criteria. We ought to criticize beliefs, institutions, customs and policies with respect to their bearing on the good. To do this we need a general "logic of experience." But what, precisely, does all this mean? As a plea—a bit of secular preaching—that we behave like rational human beings and reflect critically on our institutions, it is reasonable, but by now a truism, though one might well go on to say that it is Dewey who has helped to make it so. Dewey certainly means something more, but what, then, has he in mind? What precise role has philosophy to play as a "criticism of criticisms" beyond that of making acute conceptual analyses of the categories of social appraisal? Remember that Dewey wants something more, something that is substantive and normative. But what is it? What does Dewey do *qua* philosopher or direct us to do as philosophers that is not conceptual analysis or something of the same sort as that which social scientists, psychologists, literary critics, reflective journalists all do when they make normative recommendations? How are we philosophically and substantively to assess our social institutions in a way that would differ in kind from the appraisals of social scientists or journalists? What is this criticism of criticisms if it isn't conceptual analysis?

There is one answer Dewey *might* give that is in harmony with some of his claims made in *Experience and Nature*, but I think it would lead him into serious difficulties. He might say boldly, as has John Anderson (whose influence in Australia has been comparable to Dewey's influence in the United States), that "philosophy is science and has true statements to make about the very things any special scientist is examining—and he will know these things better, i.e., be a better scientist, if he knows their philosophical features." When Dewey talks about an "empirical metaphysics" he seems sometimes to be laying claim to something very much like what Anderson is claiming philosophy can do. And this sort of thing may not be entirely without point. Sometimes it is important to remind some people of certain empirical truisms. People, dulled by too much talk about Being or "the Encompassing," need to be reminded of these plain truths. Linguistic philosophers frequently forget

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what strange animals we have in the philosophic zoo and what idiocies still get enshrined as wisdom. But beyond enunciating these empirical truisms, could any further attempt at scientific philosophy amount to anything more than a rather outmoded restatement of certain basic scientific discoveries? What could the drive for generality amount to beyond conceptual analysis or a renewed "quest for being"? And would not the latter involve all the difficulties of the type common to those rationalistic philosophies that Dewey himself criticizes? Dewey, as we have seen, has argued there are no discoveries to be made about the world that are not testable by the scientific method and that any attempt on the part of the philosopher to go beyond the scientist and pronounce on matters of fact is fatuous. He has also claimed that philosophy does not have a special subject matter of its own, or truths of its own. Its function is critical. If Dewey intends by this anything more systematic or substantial than what we have allowed above, it is difficult to see how he could make a convincing case for such a claim in the face of 1) his own critical comments on the efforts of traditional philosophies, 2) the nearly unbelievable evolution and technicality of the sciences, and 3) the careful criticisms of this kind of philosophical approach made by the Vienna Circle, Ryle and Wittgenstein.

### V

I think, however, that we ought to look again at Dewey's conception of "a criticism of criticisms," for most of the time, at least, Dewey meant by it something rather different from what I have discussed above. Remember we are to appraise social institutions, beliefs and policies with respect to their bearing on the *good*. And here, I repeat, Dewey had something rather important in mind. Political scientists explain voting behavior and power structures in politics. Sociologists explain marriage patterns, the functions of churches in Suburbia, the effect of the new Australian emigrants on the behavior patterns of the "old Australians," etc. But, as *political scientists or sociologists*, these men cannot pass moral judgments on what should be done. More generally, scientists cannot do that sort of critical thing

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at all while functioning as scientists. As Wittgenstein has remarked in his *Tractatus*, "We feel that even if all possible scientific questions have been answered, still the problems of life have not been touched at all." Many people have become acutely aware that we need, in the best French tradition, some people to concern themselves with the task of a *moraliste*. Dewey, I believe, is searching for some kind of method whereby this most exacting task could be carried out in a less impressionistic way than Montaigne, Voltaire, Gide or Camus seems to have carried it out. Many of the very same people who are suspicious of the social scientists are rightly deeply skeptical that any such method of criticism can be usefully systematized. Analytic philosophers also can point out that when we actually watch what Dewey does we find a blend—often a confused blend—of conceptual analysis, moralizing of the same impressionistic kind that Montaigne *et al.* indulge in, and a certain amount of exhortation to be scientific and pluralistic in our attitudes.<sup>5</sup> There is truth in these claims. And it may even be impossible to develop such a *method* of moral criticism because of the very complexity of morality; but this widely held view is not an *a priori* truth, and Dewey's moderate and rather general remarks about it are not obviously false. In fact, I am inclined to think that there is more truth in them than is generally thought, and I would recommend that Dewey be reexamined with an eye to what he can tell us about general procedures of moral criticism. *In this sense* a "scientific moraliste" may not be a contradiction in terms.

Some of Dewey's followers lament that analytic philosophers are too preoccupied with the language of morals. They claim too much time goes to analyzing "good" and "moral," or to isolating special rules of evaluative inference. What we need, they argue, is a really philosophically articulate *moraliste* to clearly speak out on general substantive moral questions. Mooreans, on the other hand, complain of the conceptual unclarity of

<sup>5</sup> I have tried to distinguish and correctly place these distinct activities in my "Speaking of Morals," *The Centennial Review*, II (Fall, 1958), 414-444.

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Deweyans and of their failure to ask "really philosophical questions." To my mind, what we need are men with both Moore's interest in the complexities and importance of ordinary discourse and Dewey's interest in the substantive problems of men and the sciences of man. In articulating and defending the life of reason both are essential. In recalling to our attention that we need a group of people—and why not call them philosophers—who ask questions about the justifiability of a refined culture for the elite in the face of economic insufficiency for the masses, Dewey has reminded philosophers of something they frequently have forgotten. We should ask these questions as well as questions about the logic of moral discourse. Both activities are essential, neither can be replaced by the other or reduced to the other, and only chaos will ensue if they are confused. In thinking intelligently about the moral life we need both Dewey and Moore. Morton White has recently said that he loves the qualities of Moore's mind. I love them too, but I also love Dewey's concern for reasonableness about one's personal life and society in an age bent on neglecting reason and moral seriousness.

## *Earle Birney*

### MAMMORIAL STUNZAS FOR AIMEE SIMPLE MCFARCEN

Ah but I saw her ascend up in the assendupping breeze

There was a cloudfall of Kewpids  
their glostening buttums twankling  
in the gaggle-eyed and deleted air

We had snuk away from the Stemple  
the whoopaluyah mongrelation  
pigging their dolourbills to the kliegbright wires

We wondered at dawn into the cocacold desert  
where bitchy torsouls of cacteyes prinked at us

Then soddenly she was gone with cupidities  
vamoostered  
with pink angelinoes

O mamomma we never forguess you  
and your bag blue sheikelgetting ayes  
loused, lost from all hallow Hollowood O

Aimee Aimee Tekel Upharsin

## *Tracy Thompson*

### ASPECTS OF THE MOON'S NATURE

There was an eight-pointed star  
Told me the moon was angry,  
But I had another thought; far  
From anger is a certain ray  
That sometimes, in an off-season,  
Will stain her face like off-rouge  
And, granted that women have small reason  
Ever to drop a mask, she will gouge  
Gently that part of the citted earth  
Which carries on man's enterprise;  
Not retaliation or buck-passing. Dearth  
She knows already, as well as how to rise.  
But sometimes just shining clears the skies.

### AN ALMOST BREATHLESS EARLY SPRING

An almost breathless early spring. The Square  
Is full. I can hear the speeches starting up  
Over the loudspeaker soon, vying with the wind.  
Too much good taste for me, who have ashes  
In the mouth. The city's dream is deep again.

Find

A small stone to throw up to me; bare  
A fresh plot to the sun's spots. A pup  
Is trying to cross the Square. It dashes,  
As usual, madly, in the rosy evening light.  
There's a tame hare. Soon it will be night.

## SONNET

Ol' Laze was in the cowbells, dozin' ag'in,  
Ol' Laze, to whom we dare not ascribe a sex  
Or any characteristics, such being hex  
And, when asleep, who bothers with sin?  
But all are asleep, in the deeper sense,  
Although one or two turned over in their sleep  
To wink and nod, give out with a peep  
And go back to that world profoundly dense.  
Who understands it? Should we want to, really,  
Or wouldn't the knowledge only take our hearts,  
Something like one takes the tarts  
When one is too young yet to be real steely?  
Oh, I shall never ken it, come or go  
About it as I do, whether fast or slow.

## A MIDWINTER NIGHT'S DREAM

A sky like flapping, floating hay.  
In a pastoral green cemetery  
A single mound, grey stone.  
Three dappies,  
Neither here nor there,  
Go skipping, lisping,  
To some cracked tune that will not leave.  
A bowl moon like a poor haircut,  
Foul, casts a goldsilver glow.  
There are a few cut flowers  
Around the stone. The sky  
Has lost its appetite.



## LIMBO

I think the monkeys have a hand in this,  
And death, who can work hard, is never innocent.  
Beauty, the foundation stone of worldly bliss,  
Can't be excluded. Even love (O who shall pay the rent?)  
Can be a rogue; but mostly sirens, sirens,  
Who ring nostalgic, slatternly bells, and who  
Are always, more like angels, firin' us.  
And who is flaking down this snow so blue?  
Oh remnants of old fever, shall we learn?  
Nature a most precocious and spoiled brat!  
If we're not freezing, oh must we then burn?  
If not a dog to chew us, must a cat?  
Who shall survive these holocausts?  
Who has the mind of a ten-year-old?  
I lash myself to our modern mast  
And sail out, neither hot nor cold.

*Phyllis L. Liebling*

## A Visit to Red Lake

Photographs by *Jerome Liebling*

WE DROVE UP at the beginning of July,\* when the terrain, some rolling and some thickly wooded, had achieved its full summer lushness. The sky was a yellow-white glare, and the foliage hung heavy and polished, almost sculptural. It was hot.

Each season up here displays itself as if there were no other. Spring, when it finally succeeds in pushing its way through the layers of ice, comes in a delirious, impetuous gush, daring anything. In the fall the land is orange, vermilion, red and gold in such subtle variety that it takes your breath away. Then without warning the leaves wither, curl, and fall. The days turn cold and gray and the landscape is barren, buried under great depths of ice and snow, and a temperature that frequently falls to 30 or 40 below freezing.

In the winter there is little work on the reservation, though even in the best of times there is very little. In the warmer months there is some fishing in the lake, some work at the saw-mill, and the possibility of a garden outside the door. But in the frozen months there is virtually nothing to do. The families cluster around potbellied stoves in tarpaper shacks which are

\* In the summer of 1955 Allen Downs and Jerome Liebling of the University of Minnesota Art Department, with Mrs. Liebling, traveled some two hundred miles northwest of Minneapolis to the Red Lake Chippewa Indian Reservation. From that and subsequent visits the two men made a documentary film called *Pow-wow*, which recently won an award as the best creative-experimental film shown at San Francisco's fourth International Film Festival. The reflections on the visits to Red Lake are from the journal of Mrs. Liebling; the photographs are by Mr. Liebling.

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warm, but poorly ventilated. The birchbark wigwam, we are told, was a far more intelligent way for eight or nine people to live together in a small place. In their present homes the odors of cooking, sweating, sleeping and breathing mingle together in one potent mustiness. There is no indoor plumbing.

During this idle time there is a great deal of visiting and traveling around in old, unsafe automobiles, and much drinking. Although there is a central area to the reservation, much like a small town with its cluster of homes and stores, the majority of the families live outside this area in isolated clearings quite distant from one another. It is illegal to sell liquor on the reservation, so the Indians must travel to get it. Driving along the roads in the spring when the snow and ice have melted, you come upon the abandoned remains of one, two, a pile of cars—windshields cracked, fenders smashed, sometimes upturned like giant dead beetles. . . .

Jim Smith's brother, about fifty, had just been discharged from the hospital, where his tuberculosis had been temporarily arrested. He was seated on the doorstep of Jim's house, breathing in deep gasps, very thin, his blue eyes watery. He told us, with a wry smile, that he could do nothing in the way of work any more. He was "done," he said, and under the neat gray suit his shoulders twitched.

Jim, by contrast, was a big, dark, husky man in his late fifties, with a steady twinkle of amusement in his eyes, and a stubborn pride that I must confess irritated me at first. Looking around I could see nothing in his home or his life or the lives of his children that did not bespeak an almost pathetic barrenness. Later I began to understand that this blind confidence, this seemingly senseless optimism, was founded not so much on hope as on memory; not on things as they are, or will be, but on things as they once were. He had lived on the reservation all his life and when he was younger had worked fairly steadily at the sawmill. Now the family lived on A.D.C. (aid to dependent children). Many families, even those with youthful providers, subsist on this.

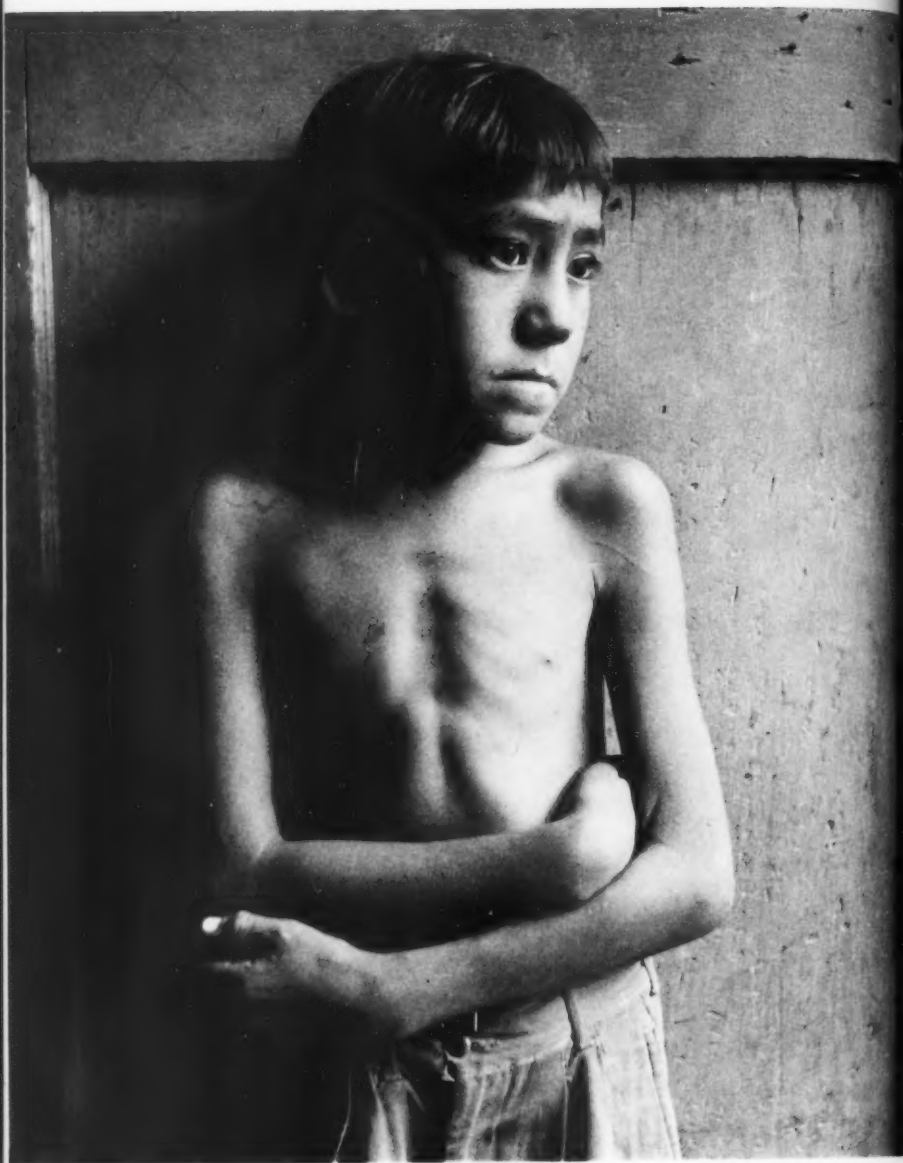
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The Smiths



Jacob

Mu



Muriel Hart of Red Lake



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## *A Visit to Red Lake*

On our first visit to the Smiths, Jim's second wife, Mary, a timid, sweet lady, stood in the doorway most of the time, arms folded across her stomach, giggling like a young girl whenever we spoke to her. Some of the children running about the place were hers, some were Jim's, and some belonged to both. The eldest unmarried girl, about seventeen, cared for the youngest child, a one-year old. She was very protective. Each time we came I could see her behind the screened window, clasping the baby very tightly to her and stolidly averting her face when I looked in her direction. When we were asked into the house one day, she ran out with the boy and stood behind a tree, waiting for us to leave. Another child, Jacob, a boy of twelve, with a pained and questioning look in his dark eyes, and ugly sores on his feet, never spoke to anyone, we were told. We learned, about a year later, that he had died. Nobody seemed to know why. They knew that he was not particularly robust, but nobody seemed to think he was ill enough to die. Another boy, thirteen or fourteen, a very handsome lad who seemed to be his mother's favorite, was the only one who had any laughter in him.

We asked Mrs. Smith to tell us something about her life on the reservation, but she quickly declined. Later, when we were better acquainted, we persuaded her to tell us the names and ages of her children. She produced a small address book from a worn purse, and began haltingly, as though unaccustomed to speech, to read the names from it. She had been bearing children for twenty years, and her belly swelled with another soon to come. Altogether, including the married and single, small and grown, dead and alive, she had borne fifteen—not an unheard of number by reservation standards.

Jim described the reservation as the only thing that remained wholly for the Indian. "We are somebody here," he said, and insisted on the superiority of Red Lake over all reservations in the country. Of Minnesota, this is undeniably true. It is the only reservation in the state that is still communally owned. Others here and in the rest of the five-state area (Wisconsin, the Dakotas, and Iowa) are looser in organization and control, and more open to the vicissitudes that affect Indians

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when they try to live by white man's rules in a white man's country. Still other reservations have been completely disbanded, and some say it is inevitable that they should be—the only answer for the Indian is assimilation. But assimilation to what, one wonders. In the larger cities of the upper Midwest where they come to look for work and make their homes, there is a good chance of their winding up unemployed, drunk, unwanted, despised, and alone. Young girls are picked up for vagrancy, and families find themselves in the substandard housing that has been vacated by other minorities.

The Indian is unique among minorities in America. He has been shut off from the mainstream of white culture, so that he has retained characteristics markedly different. But because the white man's policy towards the Indian during most of the past three hundred years has effectively destroyed almost all of Indian culture, the Indian has lost the knowledge of, the respect for, the sense of roots in his own tradition. He is caught between two worlds, neither of which he knows very well or finds himself comfortable in.

There have been compassionate and intelligent individuals and well-meaning organizations trying to help the Indian recover his sense of identity. Some of these believe that the answer to his dilemma is assimilation, the breaking up of all reservations. Yet this has proven not to be the best road for some of the Western tribes: the Navaho, Pueblo, and others who have sometimes managed to live, even prosper, under reservation status while still maintaining satisfactory and mutually profitable relations with the world at large. Obviously there is no pat answer. Moreover, the question of assimilation has a way of becoming momentarily acute whenever reservation land turns out to be valuable for oil or minerals, for grazing, or, in the case of Red Lake, as a possible resort area. Even today, unfortunately, there is that vague dishonesty, that contradiction between fine words and false acts, which the Indian, through long and bitter experience, has learned to expect of the white man.

Many people have remarked, and there is a large truth in it,

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that the Indian lacks competitive spirit. It is true that he comes to the city, often quite willingly, to better his economic condition; but it is also true that whether he articulates it or not, or even thinks it, the white man's striving, straining and competitive lust are not characteristics he takes on comfortably. To know why this is so would require a long digression into the pre-Columbian customs and cosmology of the American Indian. To know why, for instance, Indians sometimes do not seem to understand what it means to arrive on a job at a specified time (employers of Indian labor have occasionally complained of this), we would have to understand the difference between our mechanical conception of time—geared as it is to industrial efficiency—and an older conception of it, in which past, present, and future are inconceivable as separate entities.

I doubt if Jim Smith had any clear notion of how the Indian fared in the city. He'd never been there. But he did have a genuine attachment to the land. However, except for the harvesting of wild rice (outside the reservation), and small home gardens, nothing is done with the land. Not much is gained from it. Yet in slow savory speech, with a songlike rise and fall (the Indian cadence still remains, even in the children), he told of the maple-sugaring in the spring, of the wild life and vegetation that once abounded for the taking—"blackberries, blueberries, choke cherries," he said.

On the afternoon of the Pow-wow we visited Peter Graves, eighty-five year old tribal patriarch—a man about whom we had heard much heated and contradictory comment.

We walked in through the kitchen of the white frame house, where we were greeted with friendly though reticent smiles by two small girls (his grandchildren, left to him in the perpetual destruction and reconstitution of families) and by his wife, an attractive woman of about fifty, in a wheel chair. We were led through a room where clothing was folded and piled on every available surface, and into a sitting-room study crammed with volumes on history, mostly Indian history. Sitting alongside his desk was Mr. Graves—coarse white hair,

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skin wrinkled and rutted, with an ashen sheen that showed signs of failing health, and a nose that is seldom seen anywhere, a type of Indian nose, enormous, hooked and fleshy.

We shook hands and he motioned us to sit down, looking at us with a strange sideward shift of the eyes that gave me the feeling of being stalked. He continued to do this throughout most of the conversation. We asked him, at one point, about the use of peyote among the Indians. This is part of a spineless cactus that grows primarily in Mexico, and though not considered a drug (it is not habit-forming), chewing it is supposed to induce a trance-like clarity, visions, and communication with supernatural powers (pagan or Christian, as the case may be, sometimes a combination of the two). He said its use was quite uncommon in this area. It was hard to get. And besides, he implied, the white man, in his unfathomable lack of proportion, had at various times chosen peyote as something to raise a fuss about. Peter Graves thought there were more important things to attend to. And the chewing of peyote was, after all, only one among many ways of attaining insight. "I can sometimes look into a person's eyes," he said, "and find out all I need to know." He looked very steadily into mine, and though I'm not sure what discovery he made, he did not shift his stare, and his eyes were uncannily alert and penetrating.

We had heard of Peter Graves as a man who was single-minded, stubborn and dictatorial. We had even heard him accused of empire-building, that is, wanting to keep the reservation intact in order to maintain and strengthen his own position. I could see that he was a man deeply preoccupied, almost obsessed by his own thoughts. He never volunteered any information on our terms. If something came up that he wished to expand upon, he did. Several times he mentioned incidents in the history of Indian policy, asking us if we knew, for instance, that a certain unprovoked mass extermination of Indians had taken place here or there (giving us the exact date and the time) or that such and such treaty had been willfully ignored and forgotten. I don't think he held us personally responsible for United States Indian policy—he only wanted to be sure that,

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before we left, we got the facts straight.

He knew that conditions demanded improvement. He also knew the dreadful consequences (in other places) of the breaking up of reservations. He was quite frank in saying that the quick cash gained from such schemes would, in many cases, be just as quickly drunk up or otherwise dissipated. I was surprised at the time by his hardness toward his people on the matter of drinking. He said that before anything could be accomplished drinking must be stopped, and it was up to each drunkard to stop being a drunkard. His view differed sharply from that of the ordinary social environmentalists, but it may be possible that he saw part of the truth.

We mentioned John X. as one of the people who had first interested us in Red Lake. Mr. Graves said he knew him, that he was one of the faction that was so anxious to break up the reservation. We had first met him in Minneapolis, and I had liked him for his easy friendliness. He made some sort of living selling junk, mostly old scrap iron from wrecked cars that he sold in Minneapolis. Now he was very helpful in introducing us to people at Red Lake. He invited us into his home, the usual two-room tarpaper shack, and showed us his freezer and television set. He thought of himself as the object of widespread envy because he possessed them. His eight children slept on mattresses on the floor of one room. I don't know whether he ever thought of buying beds for them. After we had known him for a short time, a rather distasteful combination of crude primitivism and oily opportunism began to make itself felt. He courted prestige very anxiously.

Peter Graves disliked John, not because the man took inordinate pleasure in showing off his white wife before the world, but simply because he was not much good as a human being. He was one of those Indians, Peter implied, who in the old days would have casually sold his wife and children for a barrel of whiskey and gone to live at the fort.

Peter told us something of his early life. As a young man he had been taken from the reservation to be educated in a special school in Philadelphia. He had become a Christian, and though

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he still considered himself one, he could not regard the old Indian beliefs as so much superstitious nonsense, to be summarily stamped out. He seemed to be one of those who try to differentiate the religion of Christ from the practice of its imperfect earthly representatives. He told us that every day he received requests from religious groups for the establishment of new churches at Red Lake. "But," he said, "I think we have already given up enough land for God."

It was growing late, and Peter was beginning to get tired. Not with condescension to us, but with ironic recognition of the stereotype of the Indian, before we left he smilingly put on an elaborate, large-feathered headdress. He sat stiffly, arms folded across his chest—an old king—saying ironically that this headdress was rarely, if ever, worn by the Chippewa or, for that matter, by any other Indians. I felt a great sadness at that moment, a great sense of loss. . . .

Each year at Red Lake there is a Fourth of July celebration that corresponds to an Indian summer festival of ancient origin. It is intended partly as an attraction for the tourist trade in nearby Bemidji, though for some reason few tourists put in an appearance. I remember one of them quite clearly. He all but pounced upon a middle-aged Indian woman in dance dress, and with his hand across her shoulder began to hop up and down rather ludicrously, while his wife recorded his antics with a movie camera. The Indian woman didn't react. She simply stared straight ahead with a kind of patient stoicism that I noticed frequently in the older people. But many Indians come from all parts of the region: Chippewa from Wisconsin and Iowa, Sioux from the Dakotas. They also come from Montana, Oklahoma, even Canada. They come with their families in cars and trucks and, together with Red Lake Indians, camp on the edge of the festival grounds overlooking the lake.

Early in the morning, before any activity is underway, the drummers gather before a pup tent for informal practice. Keen intensity is in their faces and movements as they lean forward one at a time to take up the rhythm of the leader. Knees touch-



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ing around the drum, they beat softly and quickly, then loudly, then softly again while the chant of the long soft vowels eeeeeee-aiyeeeeee weaves in and out of the rhythm, vibrating under the hollow pulse of the drum, rising and fading on the air that even so early, in spite of the lake breeze, feels weighted with heat.

A disheveled young mother, who has been trying to keep her many children in tow, pauses to listen; and a teen-aged boy with sleek hair and indolent stance eyes us with a quiet confusion of a smile, as though he doesn't know what to make of us, the songs, or himself.

All through the afternoon, leaning on the wooden posts, or settling down inside on the narrow benches of the arena, chatting and watching, old, young, dark, fair-skinned. Sometimes on the faces of the men a weary, stupified look, as though they have just risen from sleep. All are waiting for the dancing to begin.

Many of the faces, especially the younger ones, are far from what you would expect Indian faces to be like. The esthetic result of the mixture of Indian, first with French, and now with Scandinavian blood, is a lovely thing to behold. The skin may be a soft honey color or darker, or lighter—may even have the Scandinavian pallor, so that there is no remaining hint of Indian origin. It is usually quite smooth and flawless, sometimes freckled. The eyes are predominantly dark, with what seem like glints of blue and green, that give them a changing, almost challenging appearance. The hair may be dark or light, blond or brown, hanging heavy and straight to the shoulders. Or it may be quite black, with a soft sheen, like polished chestnuts.

At sundown the momentum increases with crowds of dancers entering the ring, some with concentrated solemnity, an earnestness that is moving, others with a hint of playacting or even pretense about them. Children, swarms of them, shadowing their elders' every step, attempting to pattern their irregular joyous romp to a controlled rigor. And many old men, grinning with pleasure like long-confined children at being allowed at last to play in the open air. Women, some whose slim spry bodies belie their deeply wrinkled faces, and others, round



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and heavy-bosomed, their hair, ordinarily held back in many neat buns, now cascading in rivulets down shoulders and backs. Curiously, some of the latter reminded me strongly of the women of Eastern and Southern Europe. They are dressed in cotton crepe, dull red or blue in color. The animal teeth, which in the old days were attached in rows around hems and yokes, making a clack-clack-clack accompaniment to the drums, have been replaced by metal snuffbox lids, rolled up very ingeniously. They can be bought for a penny each at Red Lake's combination garage, refreshment stand, and souvenir shop. Most of the men wear old tan army garb or just anything at all, overlaid with beads, bells, and headgear.

In the late evening and on into the night we watched the dancers circling in the shadowed glare of the arena, the fringe of milling spectators widening toward the center, and the clattering, the jingling, the drumming, the laughing and chanting rising in an ever-increasing din.

At the height of the fervor, when sweat spread on backs and under arms and stood out like small glass beads on every face, it began to rain. It started slowly, after weak-rolling thunder and distant lightning. The excited crowd, reluctant at first to disperse, paused for an instant to look up at the sky. The down-pour finally came with a streaked sizzle that darkened and scattered everything.

We took shelter in one of the concession tents where Indian dolls and beads, cokes and franks, were being sold. Some teenagers came in, drenched, laughing and giggling. The boys took out cigarettes and lit them. The girls shook the water from their hair and combed it, shyly smiling from the corners of their eyes, while older people standing nearby teased them indulgently. The tent flapped wildly at the top and water seeped in, producing an odor of damp cloth and wet wind. A man came in and wandered, unsteady and red-eyed, around the tent, stopping at one of the counters to examine some beads. Then, head down, he staggered out again into the darkness.

The rain stopped. We walked back to the car over torn grass and muddy ground. The arena was empty and the night had settled into silence.

## *Jerome L. Mazzaro*

### MORGAN STREET

I come from work, toting my lunchpail  
like bouquets of  
sweet peas, peonies, or roses,  
which you snatch up, oh, so off-handedly!  
as if that were the evening's decoration,  
the table's frailest centerpiece,  
and as if you coquettishly  
expected such a gift in return  
for simply keeping the whole house in order,  
the four walls straight,  
the arm chairs neatly turned,  
the drapery humming with a harmony of love,  
and the evening papers,  
laid out and neatly folded into news.  
And giving it,  
I seem to get vast worlds returned  
as if inside your throbbing womb  
you carried all the childhood woes  
of voyaging through Woolworth's all alone.

Lloyd Zimpel

## Wrung Dry

DUST COMING OFF the wind-bent wheat and graveled road forced us to close the windows of the rented car before we were ten miles out of town. The heat and stuffiness and rough road only added to the resentment I'd brought with me. I sneered at the land. "How'd you like to live *here*?" I asked Bass, the photographer who had been sent with me. But he missed my sarcasm and only grunted out of his hung-over doze. He hadn't said a dozen words since we had started three hours earlier from the airport at dawn. All through the flight he had slept, waking with a curse when we landed square in the middle of all the wheat and flax in South Dakota.

All around us stood fields of dizzily waving grain, hardly a tree under this broad sky, and houses miles between. I followed the miserable road on faith, not at all sure that the sullen young man in overalls at the car rental agency hadn't deliberately given the wrong directions. At each infrequent big lead-colored mailbox I slowed, already watching for the name Miller, although I knew it was much farther along. A mile or so into the grain from each mailbox, a windmill's top rose up, spinning to invisibility in the wind. Sometimes there was a tree or two also, and a string of telephone poles to mark a farm's location.

An hour out of town we passed our first car, coming at us in a funnel of dust; the driver's face, seen in the instant of passing, showed surprise at finding another automobile where generally there were only the rangy gray jackrabbits that loped now in weed-filled ditches.

I was to go sixty miles from the airport, my boss Fensterwald

## *Wrung Dry*

had told me, giving me vague directions before I left the office—"You'll make it in an hour," he said. I envisioned smooth miles of concrete through green hills; and here, for more than an hour, we had banged over this rough road, pebbles hitting the floor beneath our feet like buckshot, and nothing to see in all that space but tan wheat. The sun was fierce; a hundred degrees, I guessed.

"Two hundred," said Bass humorlessly.

He stared out of his window, kept from dozing now by the heat and the jolting. "I don't dig this country a bit," he said.

All the wind and sun and endless pale blue space frightened me, too. I'd told Fensterwald, as a little joke to show him I didn't like the idea of coming out here, that I might get lost and not show up for a week. Now it seemed quite possible. I was all the more unhappy because being here wasn't part of my job. Fensterwald was getting paid for this kind of carrying-on; I was no more than a copy-writing underling in his public relations department. I sat at my desk, smiling, but inwardly sneering at the foolish people around me. Avoiding work was my job. When it came to taking photographers into the wilds to photograph a couple of crippled kids and thereby promote business and good will, that was Fensterwald's specialty. He had the heart for it, good will was his passion. But some Chicago meeting suddenly needed his talents, he couldn't make the Dakota trip. "On those kids," he told me. "You go out there with this photographer Bass I lined up and get the story, Okay? You know what we want. Fiftieth anniversary stuff like we been doing. Wring whatever you can out of them and I'll help you sift it over." I knew what he wanted but I wasn't the man to get it. When he gave me directions and I leaned forward grinning as if anxious to lick his boots, I was really trying to strengthen the resolution within to tell him to stick it, this South Dakota business and all the other ads, brochures, pamphlets, publicity releases and boring humdrum crud that I screwed myself into knots turning out. The resolution died, as it always did, and I only smiled all the more—still the congenial kid not long out of college trying to get his

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toe into a little security. It was the role I'd cut out for myself, and I played it well. I knew what they all thought of me—he's pleasant enough, but no big laughs. I produced just enough work to keep from being fired. The rest of the time I sat miserably at my desk, shuffling papers. Fensterwald, with big ideas at first of making me a right-hand man who spouted brilliant sales promoting ideas, soon gave it up. My limp personality didn't mold—not like that. If I was anything Fensterwald could use it was an inside man, nothing else. I knew for a fact he was disappointed when he found this out. He thought he had hired a fire-eater, from the way I talked it up on our first interview. All he bought was incompetence, indifference, and downright laziness. He had a right to his disappointment. As for me, my boredom and bitterness were my own fault.

I'd be better off as a hired hand on one of these endless wheat farms, I thought with aversion. It was the most far-fetched possibility I could think of, but it helped me define the lengths to which I might go before wholly knuckling under to Fensterwald. . . .

Through the endless acres of wheat we came finally to the Miller mailbox, the name painted crookedly in barn paint—Harold Miller. I swung the car off the gravel road and into the narrow track that led through flax on one side and wheat on the other. Suddenly I was struck by one of those hideous ideas that in the past year or so I'd been implementing in spite of myself—they kept me in Fensterwald's good graces. "Let's go back and get a shot of that mailbox," I told Bass.

He saw no sense in doing so and I explained: It would make a good introductory shot to a picture essay type of layout, if we decided to use that sort of thing. Grumbling to himself, he unloaded half his equipment from the back seat and set up in the dust in the middle of the gravel road, sighting his camera to frame the sad mailbox with miles and miles of sky and grain. I congratulated myself on the artiness of it.

With Bass packed again, we headed off into grain which grew as high as the car windows. I had the sensation I was

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immersed in dry, dusty liquid. The roadway was narrow, with no ditches, so that I could reach out and strip off handfuls of wheat and hulls.

Ten minutes through this rolling sea and we came out into the Millers' yard—a level island with a house, a barn, windmill, corncrib and sheds, all old and needing paint. In the space and sun they looked larger than they really were. Around the house a dozen trees, leaves baked to a pale off-shade of green, stood ready to die; in the hot shade of the barn an old horse hung its head and bent one foreleg, resting. Scrawny pigweed grew in spots on the hard earth of the yard.

In the midst of the pigweed I stopped the car, and at once two lean gray hounds came tearing from ambush behind the corncrib, slavering and snarling in a frenzy of viciousness. At the sound of their fury a woman in a floppy, frayed straw hat opened the door of a long shed and looked out. Two white chickens lazily emerged by her feet.

I leaned from the window to tell her who we were—she'd had a phone call from Fensterwald the night before telling her to expect us—but the dogs immediately bounded to my door, leaping up, nails raking against the metal. They showed me long, bared teeth.

The woman yelled at them, and they stopped snarling to sulk and slink around the car. She hurried over to drive them away with a swinging lard pail half full of chicken feed. With her faded cotton dress whipping about her lean legs she chased them back to the corncrib.

"They won't bother you now," she said apologetically, coming back to the car. Her sharp, narrow face, with a suggestion of white mustache on the tanned skin, was filled with curiosity. I told her we were the men Fensterwald had called about.

"I'd been expecting you," she said. "Have a nice trip?"

The question took me aback. Somehow it was not the sort of pleasantry I expected from this woman who, in all her sun-browned sinewy maleness, looked to have been molded from the earth she stood so solidly upon. I rather expected a grunt or a few monosyllables on the weather or the crops; I would have

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been less surprised if she had scooped up a handful of dirt and silently run it through her fingers.

"Well, yes, it was okay," I lied, and opened the door. Immediately the dogs came stalking forward. Mrs. Miller howled and swung her pail. They retreated, and she came back to watch Bass haul his equipment from the car—tripod, flash, cases, wires, strob unit. She seemed as uneasy about it as we did about the dogs.

As I got from the car out into the direct glare of the sun, I heard a house door slam, a thin, far-away sound in the baked air. There were the honored two themselves, the twins, standing on the concrete platform that served as a porch. They stared suspiciously at us.

"Those the twins?" I asked, and Mrs. Miller turned as if to make sure. Bass looked too, and even the dogs, waiting on their haunches in the shade of the corncrib, followed our gaze.

"Yes," she said.

"Pretty little things," I said, at my most phony and pompous—they were too far away for me really to tell what they looked like. I saw only their tangled hair blowing in the wind and the dirt spots on the knees of their faded jeans.

Bass finished unloading and looked to me now for directions, of which I had none. I turned to Mrs. Miller. "Where's your husband?"

She pointed beyond the windmill and barn and the tired old horse. I saw nothing but wheat to the end of the earth. "In the field there," she said.

There was a long silence. On the concrete porch the two little girls stood staring. I heard the sound of the wind, as steady as if it had blown through the wheat since the day the world began. It blew Bass's hair down to cover his sweaty frown, and he brushed it back with a great show of annoyance. Beside me, under the sun-heated hood of the car, the motor gave off alarming little cracking sounds as it cooled. On my neck and uncovered arms the sun threw a fierce heat; it was one thing more to blame Fensterwald for—a miserable sunburn.



## *Wrung Dry*

"He'll be up for dinner in an hour or so," she said. "If you want him for anything."

Appealingly, Bass looked to me, as if I would assure him that we would by no means stay here for an entire hour, exposed beneath the sun like bugs turned up from under a rock.

"I don't know that we'll need him," I said to Mrs. Miller. "All we want is some shots of the twins, and some information about them. What're their names?"

"Trudy and Tammy," she said, looking toward the porch again as if she had to see them to remember who they were. With an inward flinch I set the names down in my professional little scratch pad. In the middle of all this sun and space, Trudy and Tammy—names for movie starlets.

Bass fiddled around to catch my eye. "How many shots do you want?" he asked casually, as if he really knew but was only testing me. Now, at the last moment, he was trying to find out what the entire business was about; I'd told him once as we waited for the plane, and Fensterwald had told him the day before, but he had paid no attention to either of us.

"Get some shots of them running around," I said. "Petting the horse and feeding the chickens—stuff like that—" Suddenly I remembered the kids were crippled. I turned to the mother. "Can they get around all right?"

"Oh, sure," she said, and looked at me strangely. "They've been walking since they were a year or so."

"I mean, they said there was some sort of—disability—"

"Oh, that doesn't amount to anything. They took some treatments for a while for crooked hips, but it's all right now."

This information, in some vague way, made me feel dishonest twice over. They were supposed to be crippled; that was the point of the whole thing. I fumbled with my scratch pad and said, "Well, good, then we can get some action shots of them."

Shouldering the strap of his camera, Bass walked to the house. I doubted that I had given him proper instructions, ones Fensterwald would approve of. Did we want photographs of the kids running and jumping around? The company needed

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not joy but pathos to show how it honored the halt and the blind—a trust fund for the college education of the little lame Golden Anniversary Twins. What we really needed were shots of braces, crutches—Fensterwald's human interest and good will stuff.

The mother told me more about the hips, some congenital thing easily corrected in infancy. Dutifully, I wrote it on my pad while my sweaty hand slipped on the pencil. The sun was wearing on me, my knees seemed weak, as if the weight of all that hot sky on my shoulders was too much. . . .

Bass had no luck coaxing the kids off the porch. Mrs. Miller called, "Come on down girls, come on and play." But they only stared as if they didn't understand. She walked to the house, to haul them down bodily I supposed, and I followed, looking at her heavy black shoes with wads of dust and dung at the insteps. Her ankles were thick, sternly workman-like. She was still a fairly young woman, thirty-five or so, but she had the sweated-out, brittle-dry quality of cowboys seen in pictures. All her juices had evaporated so that, quite aside from the fact that she was ten years my senior, she was sexless as the pale, dying trees around the house.

"Come on kids, he wants to take your picture, that's all," she said.

Looking closely now at the twins' tanned faces I suddenly realized that they weren't very bright. And surely they were by no means pretty. A mask of stolid dullness lay over their features, neither face much like the other so that there was little except similar size and dress to mark them as twins. Not a likely Golden Anniversary pair, I thought. No matter how well Bass's photographs turned out, he'd be doing a good deal of retouching. Who had chosen these unattractive children, I wondered, and why? And they weren't even crippled as they were supposed to be.

Bass, maneuvering adroitly, tried to make the best of one bad pose after another. "Okay, kids, let's run and play," he said, sounding as if he spoke from between gritted teeth. One of the girls ran to her mother, and the other, with a peculiar little

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lope that favored her left leg, followed. Bass looked at me, his hair hanging in his eyes.

I walked toward the twins. "Want to play with the nice horse?" I asked. One of them, the one with the strawberry mark on her jawbone, gave me a terrified look and squeezed against her mother. "It's a *nice* horse," I said, smiling. They didn't move; the mother had to drag them toward the barn.

We went through the gate by the water tank into the barnyard and to the shade where the old horse, a mare, quivered and snuffled her nose against the flies. Mrs. Miller got the kids to pet the hanging head while Bass took several quick shots. As he unloaded and loaded again I wrote: "Tammy and Trudy play with old Maud, twenty-three-year-old mare raised from colt by Mr. M. Like a kitten to them."

Huge flies, their buzzing like the sound the sun might make, circled the tan heaps of droppings. Shade or not, here where the wind did not reach, it was stifling. Old Maud, purple in the shadow, sloughed her hide and whisked her wire tail with the weariness of age; the kids suffered themselves to be seated on her, and then whimpered till I took them down.

Unbuttoning his shirt, Bass went after whatever else he could get—the kids splashing water on each other from the stock tank while old Maud watched with half-closed eyes and overhead the windmill spun steadily in the wind. The dogs, on their haunches, watched all with hungry eyes.

"Let them play with the dogs," Bass suggested, leering sadistically; I was surprised when the mother called the beasts over—my skin prickled at seeing their eagerness to get close to us. But Mrs. Miller seemed confident she had them in hand. The twins refused to go near them. Bass took two or three shots of the four confronting one another from a safe distance; he dragged out the shooting as if he hoped the hounds might overcome their discipline and leap to devour their young mistresses, but they made no such move.

After sternly sending the dogs off, Mrs. Miller dragged a reluctant yellow cat from the barn, a half-wild creature that rolled its yellow eyes and scratched while the kids did their

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best to hold it. The agile beast gave them great fun; they yanked at its tail, giggling all the while. One of them kept knocking it in the head with a corncob until the cat raked her across the hand. I was surprised that she didn't cry—the pleasure was worth the pain apparently.

When the cat broke free and scrambled back to the barn loft, we hauled the twins off to feed the chickens which lay with half-open beaks in dustholes around the chicken coop. Far from running after the grain the twins so liberally scattered, they scarcely lifted their heads. We gave them up at once.

"How about if they change clothes now?" I asked the mother. "Have them put on their party dresses, you know, Sunday clothes. We'll take some shots of you with them in the house."

I'd been doing nothing but jotting notes, but I was as hot as if I had run for miles. Poor Bass was dripping sweat into his viewfinder and trying to keep his soggy hair out of his eyes. He was beginning to give me strange looks, as if the sun was getting to him. As we walked to the house I reassured him: "We'll be done in half an hour."

"Hell, let's stay till it warms up," he said with a note of desperation.

The house was cool, all the shades were drawn against the blasted sun. In the half-dark kitchen with its farm smell of soap and bread and earth, we all drank root beer that Mrs. Miller fetched from the refrigerator. Then she hurried the twins off to get them changed.

With three glasses of cold root beer in him, Bass slumped in his chair with his feet outstretched. "I never saw it so hot or windy," he confided, as if he had discovered something of interest to me. "Man, I'm boiling." From his pocket he drew his comb, and with his hair out of his eyes and the sweat mopped from his face, he seemed to undergo a change. He grew more expansive, more talkative than he had been all day. Perhaps he had finally sweated out his hangover. I only itched with the heat, all my clothes stuck to me. His good humor, come on him so suddenly, irritated me.

## *Wrung Dry*

"I think I got some good ones of that horse," he said. "Horses are tremendous to take photographs of anyway."

I doubted that he had ever before taken a photograph of a horse, but I kept silent, staring at the sticky white froth on the inside of my root beer glass. It was bearing in on me more and more depressingly that my being here was Fensterwald's biggest piece of craziness yet, somehow made all the more insane by Bass's senseless change of mood. All the wheat dust the wind had driven through my shirt and pants dried to me with my sweat. I felt coated with South Dakota, no longer myself. Outside the sun waited and the wind blew, both waiting to flatten me into invisibility against the hard earth. The magic of it made me dizzy. I yawned. Bass, so suddenly full of pep, could drive back. I'd sleep all the wonderful way.

I started to tell Bass this when the door behind me opened; all the sun and hot wind rushed in off the porch as if to claim me before I could get away. I turned to see nothing but the white of noon, blinding after the the kitchen gloom. The screen door slammed shut, mercifully returning the cool half-dark.

"Harold? Is that you?" Mrs. Miller called from her hidden room.

It was the husband and a young boy, nine or ten, barefooted and staring with wonder. Harold, the husband, not surprised to find us here, took off his dirty army fatigue cap and nodded. He was thin, a middle-sized man who seemed to have hardened some indeterminate number of years before into his late thirties. "You the fellows from the Cities, eh?" he said. "I saw your car out there."

"That's right," I told him. "We're here to get the pictures."

The twins, I saw now, got their heaviness of feature, their grossness of expression from him. The boy standing so silently in the corner by the sink was obviously theirs, too, although I had not known there was another child. This youngster most resembled Mrs. Miller, sharp-faced and intent. Both man and boy were baked red from the sun.

Throwing his cap on a chair by the door, Miller shook hands with Bass, then with me. I withdrew my effete paw from his

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calloused dust-filled grip feeling like a city slicker indeed; my own fair-skinned arm looked like the under belly of a fish beside his own. It seemed to me, as I stood before the man, that he had been weathered down to some sort of basic unit; its unfamiliarity made me uneasy, and I envied him my own uneasiness, yet pitied him for the dull features, the empty eyes. Whatever all his wheat fields, all his space, his unfenced land, had made of him, it had cost him something in the bargain. Fumbler that I was, with him I felt the smoothest of con men—and I resented that, too.

Miller turned away to wash his hands at the sink; the boy still watched. I realized our coming had upset the entire family's schedule—Miller and his son had come for the lunch his wife had not yet started. Now, not knowing what to do with himself, the poor man had to stand around, painfully passing the time of day with strangers. In the silence he rubbed his stiff stubble of beard; I could hear the scratch of it ten feet away.

Finally, for want of anything else, I said: "How are the crops?"

He stared at me. "We need rain bad," he said, as if I was the one who withheld it.

But from the way he said it, so fervently, I understood that this was an overwhelming concern with him. Rain. He brooded all his waking hours, I am sure, and when he slept he dreamed passionate dreams of his arid acres splashed with cool showers.

"It ain't rained since May," he said.

I sympathized with a shake of my head to show him that I was only one more helpless soul wondering how fate could be so cruel. But it was all pretense on my part. Rain—and sun and heat and space—was his master. What was it to me?

"Maybe you'll get some soon," I said, and he gave me a sidelong glance of curious wonder. Somehow, in some mysterious way, I had shown myself to him for what I was. He had nothing more to say to me. I was puzzled by his sudden contempt and resentful of it, but I sat shamed and silent all the same, trying to trace down my mistake.

## *Wrung Dry*

Bass, putting film in his 35 mm. camera, made the only sound in the room. All eyes fastened on him. He looked up, smiled at Miller and began talking about old Maud.

"Bought her when I was twenty-two," Miller said. "She was the second head of stock I ever got when I started farming on my own."

With a sharp click, Bass shut the camera and rolled the film into starting position. "What was the first?" he asked, as if he were really interested.

"A heifer. She died, fifteen, eighteen years ago, I don't know."

As if Miller had announced the death of a close relative, Bass ducked his head sympathetically. If he knew what a heifer was I would have been surprised; but I envied the dishonest ease with which he made it seem he did. I was figuring a way to work in a story about an old dog I had when I was a boy—he lived to be fifteen and I knew that was unusual for a dog—just when Mrs. Miller came into the room, shooing the twins in front of her.

All three were scrubbed and newly dressed—the twins in candy-striped cotton frocks that were far too gay for their joyless faces, and Mrs. Miller herself looking out of place, hot and uncomfortable in a heavy gray suit that ended a bit too high on her hard legs.

With a blink of astonishment Miller took them all in. What was this, dressed to kill on a Wednesday noon? I could read it in his face. "How come you're all dolled up?" he asked.

His wife answered sheepishly, seemingly ashamed to have her husband catch her like this, and without dinner ready: "They wanted to take some pictures," she said. I blushed for the foolish inadequacy of it.

But Miller only shrugged, as if they had gone over this time and time again since Fensterwald's first letters and phone calls, and he had grown resigned. It was his wife who was the most bothered.

"I got to fix dinner," she said to me. "How long will this take yet?"



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"Fifteen minutes, maybe."

"You wouldn't stay for a bite, would you?" she asked as an afterthought.

"No time," I said. "Thanks." I led her into the living room where I sat her between the twins on the livid red-maroon sofa. From a shelf overhead pale green plants, wilted with the heat, hung limp vines near their heads. Mrs. Miller thumbed through a Mother Goose book while the twins looked listlessly on. Bass took the shots he wanted and then got the girls to wrestle with a pair of huge teddy bears which the mother said they had slept with since they were infants. I wrote it down, and while Bass finished up, I got the last of the background information I needed. I was getting desperately anxious to leave, and I no longer cared how good Bass' shots were or how accurate was the information I set down. It was certain that whatever I had done, it wasn't what Fensterwald wanted. *Who cared?* I asked myself with fierce abandon. "Get your stuff together," I said to Bass.

"You're all done now?" the mother asked. I told her we were, and she quickly put on her apron and grabbed plates from the cupboard. "Sure you won't stay?"

I declined again, motioning Bass to hurry. The table was already set, and Miller was standing by his chair at the head of it, waiting for us to get out so he could sit down: Bass and I were intruders who indecently lingered when we should by all rights be gone. If that was indeed what he thought, I agreed. I headed for the door, anxious to let hungry Miller get to his feeding.

"Goodbye, goodbye," we called. Bass went out ahead and the door banged shut behind me.

Blinkingly I faced the hot acres of wheat; then as my eyes adjusted themselves to the white light I saw the two dogs bearing savagely down upon us from out of the pigweed. My hair prickled and I tried to raise a feeble cry. They came loping forward. I waved my little scratch pad to do battle.

But just as the slavering muzzles poked at our ankles, the door behind us flew open and the high-pitched voice of the

## *Wrung Dry*

little boy screeched forth in obvious imitation of his father: "*Lay down, you mutts! G'wan, beat it! Scat out of here!*"

With watering eyes rolling from the little boy back to Bass and me, the beasts paused uncertainly, then backed off. Grabbing a broken broom from the porch, the child watched over us as we walked stiffly to the car. I felt silly and helpless.

The boy waited with his broom until Bass had started the car and turned it around. Then, returning Bass' wave, he went back inside, and immediately the dogs sprang viciously at our moving tires. In the driveway I leaned out and swore them up and down, but they knew who their master was and paid no attention to me.

Finally, a half mile into the wheat, we outdistanced them. But all the way back through the dust, heat and wind their moist eyes and bared teeth stayed with me. In the airport I dozed and forgot them. Late in the afternoon the plane lifted into the cool sky above South Dakota. We flew swiftly away from the sun's wicked eye, and the simple fact that I was going home pleased me greatly, yet left me half hoping I would never get there.

# THE DANCE

## ARTISTIC HONESTY

Jan Veen

LEONARD BERNSTEIN has created a new word, "rightness." He uses it in describing music by Beethoven. "Whenever one gets the feeling that whatever note succeeds the last is the only possible that can rightly happen at that instant, in that context—that's 'rightness.' This is the real goods, the stuff from Heaven, the power to make you feel of the finish: 'Something is right in the world; there is something that checks throughout, that follows its law consistently, something we can trust, that never will let us down.'"

When we exchange the word *movement* for the word *note*, we see a correct definition of dance composition.

The same principles apply to these two *very* closely related arts—music and dance. Form is essential in both. Both need rhythmical phrasing, both the use of dynamics. An idea, abstract or concrete, is the motive for both. Whereas space in music is two-dimensional in its "up-down," it is three-dimensional in dance, which has, like architecture, floor pattern and air pattern (façade). To the up-down (height) are added side-side (width), front-back (depth), and "slants" (or diagonals). The last can run through all three dimensions.

Common to music and dance composition is *honest* creation, heart-felt and inevitable in its growth. An idea may come from a poem, a novel or a happening in life. The initial themes emerge from the subconscious into the conscious and unfold after they have become concrete in their own one-time, only possible way! Whether the theme emerges from a mood (sadness, gaiety, etc.), from dynamics (whether powerful, tentative, weak, elastic, etc.), from rhythm ( $3/4$ — $4/4$ — $7/4$ , etc.), space (curved, angular, etc.) is unessential. Essential, however, is its development, the *honesty* in its development. This honesty is all too often absent and replaced by "cleverness" and sheer "know-how." No more divine spark of inspiration! Instead, "Let's be original! At any price, by any means original! What we do must be different!" The present fad is *different*. Art is replaced by applied craft. Forgotten is the feeling which speaks directly from man to man, absorbed by ear through music and by eye through dance.

## Artistic Honesty

Our technique, both in musical and dance training, has become formidable. We learn every trick of composition and construction. Rarely is the young student made to listen to the voice within or to follow a dream until it has become clear reality.

We go rapidly into counterpoint, variation, inversion, dissonance (called "distortion" in dance), rhythmical and dynamic surprises. These surprises are employed to shock the audience who are subjected to hard, unexpected sequences of notes and movement. Their "creators" are no longer intent upon the natural current which runs its own logical course. "Oh, no! The audience might lean back! By any means, let's keep them sitting on edge!"

Admittedly, our times foster this fad. Political turmoil, high tension in business life and industry, and unbalanced education contribute to erratic or neurotic approach. But these must not be allowed to become an excuse or motivation for creative shortcomings or camouflaged barrenness. Choreographies have been applauded in which the individual dancers moved absolutely without *any* inner spatial or rhythmical relationships; then they got together on a specific, previously agreed-upon note; after which they moved together. This was declared to be counterpoint. But there was no point! We seem to have forgotten that there has to be a *point* to make a *counterpoint*. In music we often get the same bogus. Three times  $5/4 = 15$ , and so does five times  $3/4$ . Now, a three-bar phrase of the first and five-bar phrase of the latter, written deliberately in several keys and rhythms but upon the same metronomic beat and played simultaneously, produce counterpoint effects. There are many musicians and choreographers who collect praise (and royalties) with these tactics.

Architectural "ism": an endorsed, if controversial museum in which one has to look either at tipped pictures or keep one's head permanently crooked to see them straight.

Literary fad: Gertrude Stein, who should not have been copied, but was.

And—painter's foible: an unrelieved black surface on canvas received a prize. Fortunately, the trend shows refreshing signs of rejuvenation, swinging today's fashion back to harmonious movement and melody.

Curiously enough, the cause for the two decades of mushroom growth in "pseudo-art," or rather "art-craft," can be found in our greatest creative artists who have developed their own personal approach to their medium and have brought it to the finest manifestations of their own convictions. Again, we speak here not only of performing artists

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such as musicians and dancers, but also of writers, poets, painters, sculptors and architects. These artists, thoroughly honest towards themselves and their credo, having naturally caught the fancy of the populace at large, have become the fads of the "initiated" and the novelty-seekers. What is more thrilling to the uncreative and weak than to be on the bandwagon of the avant-garde and to follow the great?

The great, after all, are only human and naturally susceptible to devotion and admiration. Often, mostly in dance, music and architecture, they need acolytes to accomplish their ideas. Therefore, they form schools in which they expound their own personal theories, approaches and techniques. Successful in the public eye, they draw many followers and become the fashion. Their artistic tabus are accepted as the great tabus by the students, and their own highly individualistic point of view as gospel of the unformed, pliable disciple. Without realizing it, they become the Fascists, Nazis and Communists in our arts—the absolute leaders who, tolerating only their own approach, demand that it be executed religiously.

The faithful student, without realizing it, is pressed into the mold of the Great One and thus transformed artistically into a robot or slave knowing only to say and repeat what he has been told and taught. He has been nurtured only on biased information and received no knowledge.

Dance Education is as prolific as the proverbial rabbit and every four years, often less, produces a batch of teachers of systems or schools. Pyramids of these batches have brought out thousands of "young artists and teachers" who are greatly watered-down versions of their original, monumental masters. They have never learned how to say things in their own way. Their "compositions" are a more or less skillful or clever fitting-together of acquired material. Classic ballet makes no false pretense of declaring its enchainments as novelty, whereas "inspiration" is the claim of the modern dancer who does the same thing with contemporary, technical material plus the above-mentioned "shock" ingredients. He deliberately offends the esthetic eye and violates the sensitive ear through sensational choice of dissonant or illogical movements, sounds, and rhythm.

I do not advocate a return to Isadora Duncan, Beethoven, Greek architecture and the writings of Rousseau. One can never turn back the wheels. But it is my belief that artists who have founded schools must also keep their hearts, eyes, and sympathies fully open to the individual who comes to them for indoctrination.

As teachers, they must not violate these young, pliable minds, spirits,

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and bodies by forcing upon them their own, very personal point of view. They must first let each individual student unfold fully upon an impersonal, sound, and technical foundation coupled with free improvisation to liberate the creative spirit. Thus spontaneous impulse cradles new forms and ideas.

In composition, only the rudiments, the necessary tools should be taught in order to leave the student as uninfluenced and uninhibited as possible. Each art benefits from the others. An understanding of all related arts is necessary if there is to be a wide horizon, even if these arts become only subconscious stimulants and contributors.

Our future lies in the schools which train and produce "ism-free" artists with broad technical resources who have learned to distinguish between fashionable, artistic fads which dole out narrow information and knowledge which goes way beyond fancies and foibles. Students who have become artists in their own right must be able to speak in their respective media to their fellowmen, to touch their hearts and fire their imaginations. Through avant-garde-guided critics who are, like us, the products of our time, artists are often *forced* into something new. Last year's shock is today's old hat. Thus the magnificent though often uncreative performer is forced into inventing something different.

In some arts *re-creative* talent is shunned, which sets obvious double standards. The musician, for instance, is still applauded for his Schubert songs, Chopin-pianism and Beethoven-conducting. But the modern solo dancer is expected to show fresh, original material whether he has the stuff or not. This might change in the near future through the spreading knowledge of Labanotation, a script of symbols which records movement with absolute clarity. A library of worthwhile choreography is being established which will make it possible for fine dancers to perform the works of other creators. No one expects Isaac Stern or Arthur Rubinstein to play his own works; even creative soloists like Fritz Kreisler did not play whole programs of their own music.

Meanwhile, public resistance to non-objective art manifestations seems to be growing. Critics who only a few years ago unreservedly praised and supported these are reflecting today's audiences and listeners by their sponsoring and lauding of earlier periods. We are again approaching the other end of the pendulum which gives credit to the values of heritage and does not throw everything of the predecessors to the winds.

Fashions change; fancies, fads, and foibles vanish. But real art is timeless.

# IN REVIEW

## THE GENIUS OF MICHELANGELO

*Dario A. Covi*

IN *The Life of Michelangelo*\* Professor Charles H. Morgan, head of the Fine Arts Department at Amherst College, has written a brisk and sympathetic biography of the great Renaissance sculptor, painter, architect, engineer and poet. It is, above all, the story of an artist who was dedicated to the proposition that man is "the finest and most beautiful manifestation of God on earth" (to quote Morgan's words) and to this end was willing to give unstintingly of his genius.

Relying chiefly on the accounts of Michelangelo's two contemporary biographers, Ascanio Condivi and Giorgio Vasari, and secondarily on the published documents and letters of the master and the vast Michelangelo literature of the present and last centuries, Morgan skillfully threads his way through fact and interpretation, the sure and the unsure, the readily acceptable and the improbable. The result is a book that will satisfy and provoke both the general reader and the critical scholar. To the former, it may occasionally seem carping while generally confident and resolved; to the latter, it may occasionally seem uncritical while generally reliable and convincing. The book has the rare virtue of sounding a persuasive note in nearly every instance where the available data are uncertain or incomplete and the meaning admits of a variety of interpretations. This is so, for example, of the explanation given for Ghirlandaio's release to Lorenzo the Magnificent of Michelangelo's less promising companion, Francesco Granacci, along with the star pupil, Michelangelo; the reasons adduced for Pope Leo X's preference for Raphael over Michelangelo; and the analysis offered of Michelangelo's friendship with Tommaso Cavalieri and Vittoria Colonna. With the latter indeed, Morgan has dealt most sympathetically. He has remained true to the picture of Michelangelo which the rest of the documentation reveals, and has restored dignity where it had been eroded by timidity and the modern mania for probing the psychology of the abnormal.

Wherever Morgan takes a conservative stand, his words add distinction to previously established views. For instance, while the inter-

\* New York: Reynal & Company, 1960. \$6.00.



## The Genius of Michelangelo

pretation that the unfinished *Prisoners* originally planned for the Julius tomb represents the Platonic doctrine that the body is the prison of the soul is not new, it acquires new authority through the conciseness and directness of Morgan's statement; while the meaning attributed to the youthfulness of the Virgin in the *Pietà* of St. Peter's repeats a long-held view, Morgan's restatement is pregnant with poetry.

On the other hand, as in any work dealing with a personality as forceful and imaginative as Michelangelo's, there are areas where the reader is bound to take issue with the author. It is difficult to accept the suggestion, already advanced by Tolnay, that the *St. Proculus* at Bologna stems directly from Donatello's *St. George*, since the intense expression of the eyes is very near that of Verrocchio's *Colleoni*, which must have been fresh in the mind of the young Michelangelo coming to Bologna from Venice. One may question the statement that the Bargello *Bacchus* does not express the helplessness of an inebriated youth "but the supernatural and inspired voice and vision of a god," for its iconographic attributes are precisely those of unbridled physical appetite. It is hard to appreciate the author's reasons for calling the third scene of the Sistine Ceiling *God Resting on the Seventh Day* instead of the customary *The Separation of the Waters*, since the two following scenes belong chronologically to the creation cycle. One is struck to read that the *Venus and Cupid* after Michelangelo is exceptional because Michelangelo resorts to symbolism in order to state his meaning, since Michelangelo employed symbolic attributes in the tombs of the Medici Chapel, the *Last Judgment* of the Sistine Chapel, and the *Moses* of the tomb of Pope Julius II, to name a few examples. It is also difficult to see why in that particular painting the use of a two-dimensional medium hampered the artist, since it seems to have hampered him not at all in the *Doni Madonna* and the Sistine Chapel and Pauline Chapel frescoes. One need not assume that the Medici Chapel made no accommodation for the faithful except in the small space behind the priest, since it was customary in churches and chapels with altars oriented to face the central area for the faithful to congregate before the priest. One may question whether the vestibule of the Laurentian Library is indeed a cheerful *scherzo*, since its unorthodox features have such a disturbing character and there is little evidence in the letters, documents and other work of Michelangelo to suggest that he engaged in *scherzi*. It is by no means as certain as the author implies that the steeper outside profile of St. Peter's dome is due to Michelangelo's own revision of his original model. Finally it seems more likely that the closed coin box

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of Lorenzo and the loose coins of Giuliano, in the Medici Chapel, are symbols of miserliness and magnanimity, respectively (as Erwin Panofsky has stated in his *Studies in Iconology*), than the fare for Charon, the ferryman of the underworld.

On the whole Morgan's style is lapidary and vivid. He forces the pace to mount dramatically toward the climax of each critical event and lets it subside to a quieter flow in the intervening narrative. He has a penchant for picturesque speech, some of which, however, detracts from the substance of the biography. Such passages as "Orvieto, frowning in lofty strength above a tributary stream" seem a trifle precious.

Although Morgan's book is not intended to replace such fundamental or monumental studies as Thode's *Michelangelo und das Ende der Renaissance* or Tolnay's *Michelangelo*, it is a welcome addition to the English literature on Michelangelo. It provides stimulating reading on the artist as genius and man, with a just appraisal of the role of his patrons in the development of his work and of the links between him and the crucial religious and political situation of the time. The book has a useful index and a selected bibliography. Its plates are a convenient visual reference to the master's *œuvre*.

## TRAGIC VISION IN THE MODERN NOVEL

Seymour Rudin

IN *The Tragic Vision*\* Professor Murray Krieger examines certain major modern novelists—Gide, Malraux, Mann, Kafka, and several others—in terms of their exemplification, in varying ways, of an existentialist vision of the human condition. Sharing the familiar view that tragedy in the formal, classical sense, with its fundamental constituents of purgation, reconciliation, and ultimate tranquillity, has lost its relevance for the artist in the fragmented, anxiety-torn modern world, he postulates the "tragic vision" as an alternative defining term for representative works of our era, a tragic vision that "has usurped the very possibility of [tragedy] after having been born side by side with it." This vision is the Kierkegaardian one of the despairing man, facing the "true moral dilemma characterized by endless ambiguity," realizing the absurdity and futility of existence, and taking, in the necessity of his pride, "either the way of nothingness or the way of transcendence, but both equally the way of utter solitude." For the "tragic visionary"—

\* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960. \$5.00.

## Tragic Vision in the Modern Novel

a term that Professor Krieger prefers, in the context of the modern novel, to "tragic hero"—there is no possibility of final affirmation of order, of shared universals, as there was for the protagonist of classical tragedy. The author suggests the disturbing consideration that the aesthetic fullness and serene satisfaction of traditional tragedy now constitute no more than a beguiling illusion, that the "utterly stripped tragic vision" of Kierkegaardian existentialism more nearly expresses, for modern man, the terrible truth about his world. And he suggests further that it is to the writers who, with diverse measures of conscious intention, have most honestly confronted and embodied this endlessly ambiguous vision that we must turn for the most meaningful—if the least reassuring—image of our existence.

Professor Krieger is a careful reader of novels as well as a provocative theorist, and though his primary interest in the discussion of specific works is to demonstrate the degrees to which they embody his conception of the existential vision, there is much detailed analysis that students of *Lord Jim*, *The Trial*, *Doctor Faustus*, and other monuments of modern fiction will find illuminating. The method of most of the chapters dealing with particular novelists is to set against each more-or-less authentic tragic visionary (Gide, Malraux, the Mann of *Faustus*, the Conrad of *Heart of Darkness*) a representative non-tragic or even anti-tragic voice (Lawrence, Silone, the Mann of *The Magic Mountain*, Camus, the Conrad of *Victory*). And though any reader of *The Tragic Vision* is likely to encounter formulations from which to dissent, emphases that seem mistaken, spots that seem stubbornly blind—a reading of Camus, for instance, that regards him, for all his consciousness of the ambiguities and despairs of the human condition, as a "naturalistic liberal" seems to one reader at least short-sighted—both Professor Krieger's comparative method and his specific analyses yield consistently valuable insights. Not only the nature but the stature of Malraux' achievement in *Man's Fate* is, for example, demonstrated with particular cogency, and the demonstration is sharpened by juxtaposition with that of Silone's lesser achievement in *Bread and Wine*, lesser because in Silone "the ideologue is so securely in control that the artist never has a chance." The complexity, solidity, and power of *Heart of Darkness* and particularly *Lord Jim* are made freshly apparent not only by the subtle probing of the moral riddles that they embody, but, in a particularly relevant application of the author's method, by contrast with the easy, unearned affirmation of the later Conrad in *Victory*, the recantation that "seems a betrayal of Conrad's dramatic powers." And in a

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chapter dealing with the two nineteenth-century masters against whom all later tragic visionaries can perhaps be profitably measured, Professor Krieger offers what one hardly hoped for—analyses of Melville and Dostoevsky that manage to be freshly relevant to the total scheme of the study without eccentrically wrenching their subjects out of recognizable shape. The portrait of Dostoevsky's Myshkin, laboring "under the psychosis of humility, perhaps in its own way not much less blame-worthy than Pierre's psychosis of pride," is an especially impressive instance of the author's penetrating way with familiar subjects.

To find *The Tragic Vision* valuable for its analyses of certain modern masters and for its judicious use of critical strategy derived from an existentialist theory is not, of course, necessarily to share its author's philosophic position or to deny the values of different, even of opposed formulations. Moreover, even a reader essentially sympathetic to the conception of the tragic vision and its unique importance to the modern novel may be aware of something missing in this study, or at least of something incompletely realized. Though Professor Krieger more or less explicitly regards the Kierkegaardian vision as indispensable to the profoundest, to the truest modern literature, and though the normative distinctions he makes are generally based on the degree to which writers have succeeded in grasping and conveying it in their images of the world, the study as a whole seems tentative in its expression of value-judgments. The author appears to share with many of the influential critics whose works he treated in his valuable earlier volume, *The New Apologists for Poetry*, a conception of the critic's function as being essentially that of discriminating analysis rather than of evaluation. One may be grateful for the analytic insights and the lucid prose in which they are conveyed at the same time as one may, as with so much contemporary criticism, wish that the critic had embraced more fully the task of judge—of prosecutor or defense counsel, depending on the nature and weight of the literary evidence.

But *The Tragic Vision*, like Professor Krieger's previous book, leaves one hoping for more. One reader is moved to suggest, in view of the author's concern with poetry and poetics in *The New Apologists* and with the novel and its "thematics" in this book, that he might find provocative material in the very genre in which was first embodied that traditional conception of tragedy he sadly regards as outworn and irrelevant in the modern world. If there is no tragedy in the classical sense, is there nevertheless a tragic vision, one aesthetically worthy of such study as this volume has made of certain novelists, in our representative dramatists

## Hemingway's *Dangerous Summer*

—in Strindberg or Lorca or Beckett or O'Neill? Does modern drama offer its students an analogue to the existentialist insight that Professor Krieger finds in modern fiction? His study of the tragic experience as revealed in modern novels suggests no intention of provoking such speculation. That it does so is perhaps one measure of its liveliness and its stimulation.

### HEMINGWAY'S DANGEROUS SUMMER

Kenneth S. Lynn

JOHN O'HARA said of Ernest Hemingway's *Across the River and into the Trees* that it was the best book since 1616. For a decade that remark held unchallenged title to being the most extravagantly incorrect critical judgment of the twentieth century. Recently, however, the editors of *Life* topped it. They called Hemingway's forthcoming *The Dangerous Summer*, a few installments of which *Life* printed in three September issues, "a major new work."

For seventeen years, from the time that *Three Stories and Ten Poems* appeared in 1923 until the publication of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in 1940, Hemingway's fiction claimed the attention of the entire world, and rightly so. But for the past twenty years he has published very little—remarkably little when one considers the publicity he has received during this period—of which only an over-rated novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, bears comparison to his earlier work. The sad fact is that ever since his combat duty in World War II his energies have been increasingly at the service of Ernest Hemingway, the Famous Personality, rather than of Ernest Hemingway, the Writer. What makes *The Dangerous Summer* prospectively such an appalling book is its demonstration that the Famous Personality has at last triumphed utterly, that the talent which created *The Sun Also Rises* and *In Our Time* is now fully deployed in the service of a one-man Madison Avenue agency whose sole client is himself. To say that *The Dangerous Summer* is vulgar, embarrassing, and boring is not enough. It is a tragedy, which may well mark the end of one of the great careers in American letters. One cannot help but hope that the Writer may yet fool us all and make a comeback, even as the Famous Personality came back from the dead some years ago in Africa. (Indeed, it was in just these terms that *The Old Man and the Sea* was received.) *The Dangerous Summer*, thus far, however, does not permit us any confidence in our hope.

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Like Lillian Ross's notorious *New Yorker* "Profile," it is too shameful.

The narrative begins with the strong suggestion that Hemingway's decision to go back to Spain was the moral equivalent of the decision that Robert Jordan makes at the close of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. "I had never expected to be allowed to return," he says portentously, but he takes comfort in the fact that no matter what might happen to him, "I knew that nothing could happen to Mary [his wife] since she had never been in Spain in her life and knew only the very finest people. Surely, if she ever had any trouble they would rush to her rescue." Seldom has a Famous Personality been more modest. For Hemingway, apparently, had no idea that what is good for Ernest Hemingway is good for Franco's Spain—that his ability to make the readers of *Life* yearn to spend tourist dollars on the bullfights and the "good rough wine" of the country would guarantee him the lavish hospitality which he in fact received. As *The Dangerous Summer* makes clear, Hemingway has taken not Henry, but Temple Fielding as his literary model, and the Franco government well knows what that fact implies for its foreign exchange.

Other examples of the author's modesty abound throughout the text. Hemingway does not remind us he had won a Nobel Prize for Literature; instead, he casually observes that one can only win "that Swedish prize" once. He does not simply say he wrote *The Sun Also Rises*; he prefers to be cute about it, and says rather that he once wrote "a book called *The Sun Also Rises*." Although these jokes lamentably fail to come off, the book is nevertheless extremely funny, albeit the humor is unintentional. Thus the author expresses a fine scorn for the pretentiousness that is the occupational ailment of writers about bullfights, especially for their habit of "peppering, larding and truffling" their accounts with terms like "Manoletinas, Giraldivas, Pedresinas, Trinchirillas and other varieties of ballroom bananas." By contrast, Hemingway avers that he will eschew "using a Spanish word whenever I can explain in idiomatic English." Thenceforward, the text is peppered and truffled with as many technical Spanish terms as Barnaby Conrad himself ever dared employ. This is the sort of hilarious gag that one would expect to find in a Hemingway parody—which is one of the reasons that *The Dangerous Summer* is so painful to read. Hemingway, without meaning to be so, and with infinitely more devastating results, is his own Perelman.

The drama of which *The Dangerous Summer* tells could have made a marvelous novel. Two bullfighters, one young and daring, the other

## *An Invaluable Survey of Western Music*

aging and proud, engage in a deadly rivalry for the honor of being acknowledged as the supreme bullfighter of the era. The competition is further intensified by the fact that they have known each other for a long time and that the younger man is married to his rival's sister. But Hemingway never reveals these people to us, because he is too interested in himself—too eager to show us what a talent for palship with bullfighters he has, and too anxious to have us believe that the Hemingway myth is still a reality (up with first light, wine for breakfast, three hours of sleep a night during fiestas, lots of hard, dedicated work on unspecified novels). In a flaccid prose and with a terrible sentimentality that are all that now remain of one of the most celebrated literary manners of our time, Ernest Hemingway tells us of the most dangerous summer of his life.

### AN INVALUABLE SURVEY OF WESTERN MUSIC

*Louise Rood*

WITH THE GROWING WEALTH of new material, such a survey as Professor Donald Jay Grout's *A History of Music*\* is not only essential but correspondingly difficult to write. Much in music history defies tidy organization and the need to maintain balanced proportion is nowhere more urgent. The challenges implicit in such a task have been most successfully met.

Especially noteworthy is the clarity of its style. Terms are made readily comprehensible and put to proper use: as time-saving tools for discussion. Helpful summaries pull together the essential features of an epoch and lead to masterful introductions to the era ahead. This clear style is particularly notable in dealing with many of the confused aspects of music history. For example, writing of the thirteenth-century motet:

New words were set to old music, and new music to old words. The same melody served for both sacred and secular texts. A motet originally in three parts might lose one of its upper voices and survive as a two-part composition; more often, a third or fourth voice would be added to an earlier two- or three-voice motet; or a new upper voice might be substituted for an older one, the other parts remaining unchanged. In short, the stock of motet melodies, both tenors and upper parts, lay in the public domain; composers freely helped

\* New York, W. W. Norton, 1960. \$8.95.



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themselves to the music of their predecessors without acknowledgment and altered it without notice.

For those of us brought up on books of the 1920's, one noticeable aspect of this style is the recurrent word "probably." The new musicology has shed light on many problems; the darkness that remains is the more opaque and a mid-century historian refrains from the categorical statement. The surrounding gray areas, thus clearly seen by the reader, serve as stimulants to the imagination. History so presented is believable.

This book uses a minimum of labels, too, and uses them with frequent admonitions to stop, look and cogitate. Music history has gratefully adopted the divisions of art and literary history, not always with equal cogency. Of one such division, Professor Grout observes: "*Renaissance*, then, in the sense of a rebirth of an ancient art, is all but meaningless when applied to music of this period." Such a common-sense approach to terms, often woolly in the extreme, characterizes the whole work, which everywhere emphasizes the many overlappings of art-epochs.

The general tone of the book is one of great objectivity. But when there are editorial comments or qualifying adjectives, they are calculated to arouse the reader's response, highly desirable in a subject which must deal with much cataloguing. One such editorial comment is on Palestrina:

His work has come to be regarded as embodying the musical ideal of certain aspects of Catholicism which have been especially emphasized during the past hundred years. Partly because of this fact, partly because of the legends that have clustered around his name, and partly because of ignorance of the works of other great Catholic composers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Palestrina's reputation is higher than either his music or his historical position actually warrants. No one can doubt that his art fulfills two of St. Thomas's three requirements: it possesses, to a supreme degree, harmony and radiance; but as to wholeness, that is another matter.

The book is full of memorable images. Organum can be considered as "the lengthened shadow of a chant." In Beethoven's late works, "Classical forms remain only as the former features of a landscape remain after a geological upheaval—recognizable here and there under new contours, lying at strange angles underneath the new surface." And again, on Mendelssohn's overtures: "The program is no more than a faint mist about the structure, lending charm to the view but not obscuring the outlines."

The discussion of Verdi, noteworthy for its firm refusal to debate any

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Wagnerian influence, illustrates a further aspect of this book: its terse biographical summaries. In rounding out his discussion of Verdi's music, Professor Grout writes: "His attitude toward Nature is completely unsentimental. All his interest is in humanity; Nature is there to be used, not worshipped. Verdi is the only eminent composer who was also a successful farmer."

This survey also includes an excellent bibliography, with suggestions for further reading. It has well-chosen illustrations, a glossary of terms, and a chronological table of events—historical, artistic and musical—of great usefulness. Inevitably, there are minor errors. The Op.88 Brahms Quintet appears as a quartet; the clarinet tone emerges in the glossary, under color, as a tune. These, with one or two other small matters, can easily be rectified in the editions to come, which can be confidently predicted.

### SLAVERY AND PERSONALITY: A FRESH LOOK

John Hope Franklin

FOR MORE THAN a generation the standard view of slavery was the one given by Ulrich B. Phillips in his *American Negro Slavery* (1918) and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929). To Phillips and to the many historians who subscribed to his views slavery was a social and economic institution that contributed much to the growth of Southern agriculture and of a genteel planting class, while at the same time it greatly benefited those in thralldom. Slavery was a conscript army, a factory, a school, a parish, "a pageant and a variety show in alternation," a matrimonial bureau, "something of a harem perhaps, a copious nursery, and a divorce court." There runs through the writings of Phillips a warm defense of the institution with emphasis on its salutary effect on slave and master. In recent years this thesis has not only been challenged but some historians have gone far beyond Phillips in re-examining the ramifications of slavery as an institution. In 1944 Richard Hofstadter, in his "U.B. Phillips and the Plantation Legend," raised serious questions about Phillips' materials, methods, and conclusions. In the same year, Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* pointed up the hardheaded business aspects of the institution. There ensued a number of significant articles and books on the subject, including Frank Tannenbaum's *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (1947) and Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution* (1956). Stampp emphasized not only the palpable economic motives in slave-

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holding but also the numbing effects on the morality and conscience of the slaveholder.

A new work by Stanley M. Elkins at once ranks with the most original and serious examinations of slavery or any other institution in America. In *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*,\* Mr. Elkins is of the opinion that while nothing further could be gained from joining the debate between Phillips and Stamp and their respective supporters, it would be profitable to look at slavery from other angles. Among them are the comparative approach suggested by Tannenbaum and an approach through the organizational and intellectual aspects of the institution suggested by Gilbert Barnes in his *Anti-Slavery Impulse*. The author hopes thereby to contribute to the understanding of slaves and slavery rather than, as he would say, to the debate over the merits of the institution.

Mr. Elkins declares that within two generations after slavery was defined in Colonial America, the status of the slave was elaborated in law and custom "with such utter logic and completeness as to make American slavery unique among all such systems known to civilization." The motive of gain underlay this elaboration, but it was more than that, he insists. In the United States the system was free to develop in a society "where no prior traditional institutions, with competing claims of their own [such as the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America] might interpose at any of a dozen points with sufficient power to retard or modify its progress." Thanks to the mitigating influence of the church and concomitant factors, slavery in Latin America did not carry with it such precise and irrevocable categories of perpetual servitude as in the United States. To Mr. Elkins the role of the church in Latin America in protecting the slave from possibly harsher treatment by the state and the master is instructive regarding the conservative role of institutions in any social structure.

The author is particularly concerned with what slavery did to the enslaved. In a chapter significantly entitled "Slavery and Personality," he asserts that the "closed system" of American slavery with almost no mitigating influences or institutions had a profound effect on the slaves' personality. A series of shocks—surprise capture, the long march to the sea, sale to European slavers, the Middle Passage, and enslavement in the New World—produced a hapless, helpless, docile, dehumanized character not unlike those produced by the brutality of the concentration camps of recent times. Acceptance of and conformity to a role

\* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960. \$4.50.

## *Slavery and Personality: A Fresh Look*

defined by the master was a prerequisite to survival.

Despite the fact that the problem of slavery became an urgent, national question long before the Civil War, little was done that was constructive and effective either in the North or in the South. The Northern intellectuals, including the abolitionists, "cut off from the source of power, with virtually no vested connections, far removed from that institution with which they became increasingly concerned, thus had few tests other than their own consciences and those of their average fellow citizens to prevent their thought from moving to the simplest of moral abstractions." Meanwhile, the Southern intellectuals did not think about slavery. Instead, they devoted their energies to answering outside attacks on the institution. Thus, they concentrated on either describing Southern life in idyllic terms or calling on their fellows to meet the threat of attacks by abolitionists and the revolts of the slaves themselves.

This book is bold and original. It fearlessly employs the methods and materials of history, economics, anthropology, and social psychology. It draws upon a vast fund of analogies and contrasts. One has the feeling, however, that Mr. Elkins not only joins in the old debate he avowedly scorns, but initiates a few debates on his own. In language as strong as any used by Stamp, he tells the apologists of slavery that the institution had a deeply corrosive effect on every aspect of the slave's being. Even so, one is not altogether convinced that the effect was as complete or as permanent as Mr. Elkins asserts. There was enough initiative—running-away, revolt, and other manifestations of aspiration—to suggest that, despite the dehumanizing effects of slavery, the personality of the slaves was not destroyed altogether.

One cannot deny that, in several important respects, slavery in Latin America was not as harsh as in English America, but there were mitigating circumstances in English America, too. For example, many slaves in the Southern states purchased their freedom as did those south of the border. And it is well that Mr. Elkins reminds us that brutality was not unknown in Brazil, Venezuela, and Mexico. If the tension in Latin America between the crown, the church, and plantation agriculture had the effect of preventing the development of a "closed system" as in the United States, it may be that the crown, with its promulgation of laws growing out of experience in the mother country, shared with the church the responsibility for "humanizing" slavery.

This volume is a significant contribution to the intellectual and institutional history of America.

## To the Editor

### On Willett's "Martin Esslin on Bertolt Brecht: a Questionable Portrait"

#### Comment and Rejoinder

##### A MORE THAN QUESTIONABLE BOOK REVIEW

Sir: You have very kindly offered me space to comment on Mr. John Willett's review of my book *Brecht: The Man and his Work* in your Spring number. On the whole, I don't believe in authors penning rejoinders to unkind notices of their work. But this case presents some rather special circumstances which might justify making an exception to this rule.

Above all: I confess I find it rather unusual editorial policy on your part to tackle two books on the same subject, published within a few months of each other, by asking the author of one of them to review the other. Surely the function of a quarterly review, in contrast to daily or weekly newspapers, should be to give its readers an opportunity of seeing the literary scene in perspective and in its wider context, and this will hardly be the case if one of the interested parties is let loose on the other: which means that one of the two books concerned is not reviewed at all, and the other, even in the best possible case, from a less than objective standpoint. A review by an expert not directly involved, on the other hand, will be able to bring out the comparative merits of the works concerned.

This indeed is what comparable American scholarly publications have

done in this particular case: the *Yale Review*, for example ("Esslin's wider ranging and more skilfully written work. . . ."—Kenneth Connelly), or the *Tulane Drama Review* ("His [Esslin's] book is the best thing that has yet been written on Brecht in any language."—Eric Bentley), or the *Kenyon Review* (" . . . nor is Willett right, it seems to me, if he interprets Esslin's book as an attack on Brecht."—Ernest Borneman). In his own review Mr. Willett argues that my book is likely to mislead poor, unsuspecting critics, like the one of the *Times Literary Supplement* in London (for whose views I hold no brief) whom he quotes. He omits to mention, however, that the critic also makes the point that my book "widens and deepens our understanding of Brecht as man and artist" in comparison with his own work. But that, after all, does not prove that the anonymous reviewer concerned was not able to judge for himself. After all, he is likely to be familiar with Brecht's work, if he is asked to review German literature for so reputable a scholarly periodical. And certainly men like Eric Bentley or Ernest Borneman, who have known Brecht far more intimately and for longer periods than Mr. Willett, can not be accused of having been taken in by my sinister machinations to "denigrate" his favorite author.

## To the Editor

Mr. Willett may well believe in all sincerity that he is not only the best, but indeed the only, critic qualified to review my book. But I find it hard to understand how an editor could have failed to notice the tone of deep personal injury and resentment that colors his article.

Moreover, it strikes me as decidedly odd on Mr. Willett's part to have undertaken this particular review. His article is a rehash of a review he wrote in the *Manchester Guardian* at the end of 1959. This led to a rejoinder on my part, and from this there arose the project of a joint publication of our arguments, in far greater detail than would be possible in a short book review. Mr. Willett even refers to the fact that I "have very kindly agreed to collaborate in a dialogue." All the more questionable it appears to me that he should not have been able to refrain from putting forward all the very points to which he knows I have a very effective answer, once more, and unopposed. Is it that he did not want to miss one more opportunity of parading his misconceptions and misunderstandings about my book *without* the risk of immediate rebuttal?

Whatever his motives, Mr. Willett's methods are certainly open to grave doubt. He reiterates his allegation that my account of Brecht's life is premature and unsubstantiated. The publication of our joint discussion will show that this claim arises from his very considerable ignorance of the published documents and sources. He claims that I attach an exaggerated importance to Brecht's political views and development. Our joint discussion will show that this view arises from his almost total ignorance of Marxist theory,

which, for better or worse, played an important part in Brecht's creative thought. He tries to cast doubt on the reliability of my work by dark hints about "inaccuracies." Again, publication of our discussion will show that the points he lists are based on his own mistakes and misreadings of my own book and of Brecht. I do not want to repeat what will be published in the foreseeable future. But here are a few points he raises which are not dealt with in our dialogue.

Mr. Willett insinuates, for example, that my book suggests that Brecht "was by no means such a profound anti-Nazi as he seemed." This would indeed be a grave denigration of Brecht's character. But what is it based on? A passage in my book which discusses the reasons why young German intellectuals after World War I, just like young French intellectuals after World War II, tended towards political extremism. "This ruthlessly realistic attitude," I continue, "was in Brecht's case akin to the ruthlessness born of despair and wounded pride that led other, less sophisticated, members of his generation into the arms of Hitler" (p. 261). This passage therefore in no way suggests that Brecht had sympathies with the Nazis. It deals with the very real problem of ends and means and the connection between despair and defeat, on the one hand, and extremist, totalitarian solutions on the other. Only to a writer of Mr. Willett's disarming ignorance in political matters could the discussion of this problem, which is familiar to any reader of Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*, appear as an attribution of Nazi views to Brecht.

But, then, Mr. Willett maintains

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that a Communist like Brecht never advocated the violent overthrow of the existing social order. He asks me to "substantiate" my claim that he did. Quite apart from the fact that anyone who had ever read a single line of the Marxist classics must know full well that this is indeed one of the essential tenets of Communism, Mr. Willett seems ignorant of the numerous passages in Brecht's works that very forcefully ask for violent change. To wit:

And the ones that tell them that they  
may be raised  
in spirit and still be stuck in the  
mud, they should  
have their heads knocked to the  
pavement. No!  
Only force helps where force rules,  
and only men help where men are.

(This is from *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, and the translation is Frank Jones', not my own. I would indeed, as Mr. Willett says, translate "*Gewalt*" as "violence" rather than "force." But is knocking people's heads on the pavement *non-violence* in Mr. Willett's view? How literal and pedantic can you get?)

Or again:

What baseness would you not commit  
To root out baseness?  
If, finally, you could change the world  
What task would be too good for you?  
Who are you?  
Sink down in the slime  
Embrace the butcher  
But change the world: it needs it!

(This is from *The Measures Taken* in Eric Bentley's impressive translation. No doubt Mr. Willett will argue that the butcher in this context stands for a practitioner of Gandhian Satyagraha?

And the fact that the Communists in the play kill one of their own group for tactical reasons is no doubt in Mr. Willett's view an act of Christian philanthropy.)

But then Mr. Willett is prepared to go to quite extraordinary lengths to find fault with my work. Among the alleged "inaccuracies" of my book he lists the following: "The boy in *He who says Yes* does not jump into an abyss." Again Mr. Willett quite clearly hopes that his readers will not be in a position to check the facts or to judge for themselves the degree of inaccuracy involved. So categorical a statement certainly *sounds* very good. But what is involved? In *Der Jasager*, the play concerned, the Japanese boy in question falls ill and consents to die rather than hold up the progress of the group of travelers to whom he belongs. His friends help him by pushing him over the edge. So what is at issue is a very fine, hairsplitting point indeed. Yet, if any reader should take the trouble to look up the summary of the play in my book on page 292, he will find the sentence: "He is thrown into the abyss." Further search through the index however will reveal that there is a reference to the boy's *jumping* into the abyss. It is on page 87. And it occurs in a quotation of *Brecht's own description of the scene*(!) which is quoted verbatim from the transcript of the hearings of the Un-American Activities Committee. Brecht was trying to confuse the committee about the contents of another play, *The Measures Taken*, which is derived from *Der Jasager*; he denied that the hero of that play is shot by his comrades (which he is) by talking about the original Japanese version in which "he jumps into an abyss and



## To the Editor

they lead him tenderly to that abyss and that is the story." A few lines further on, in trying to disentangle this confusion, I point out that the play in which someone jumps into an abyss (rather than being shot) is *Der Jasager* and not *The Measures Taken*. The intention of referring back to Brecht's own words is quite obvious in that passage. And such is the basis for Mr. Willett's damaging insinuation of "inaccuracies" in my book.

If ever there was a case of overlooking the beams in one's own eye for the sake of motes in someone else's, this is it. For Mr. Willett's own book is peppered with inaccuracies of a quite different order. They spring, among many other causes, from his evident lack of familiarity with such elementary points of German grammar as the gender of nouns and the declension of the definite article, and his endearingly cavalier approach to the meaning of German terms which leads him to commit howlers that would disgrace many a schoolboy. (For example, his translation, in *Lied des Stückeschreibers* of the words "*wie sie einander aufhängen*" ["how they hang each other—on the gallows"] by "how they fasten on to each other"; or to go one better: "*die duennen Antennen, die das Atlantische Meer unterhalten*" [which means "the thin radio aerials that entertain the Atlantic Ocean"] by "the slender antennae on which the Atlantic rests." I only wonder what Mr. Willett thought *that* meant—the Atlantic Ocean being held up on the antennae of grasshoppers?) I should hardly have thought that such shortcomings in the knowledge of German provide a particularly good basis for setting up shop as a discriminating critic of one of the

greatest masters of subtle and ambiguous German. The results of this are only too evident in Mr. Willett's book: he even failed to notice the main motives of the action in some of the more difficult (and hitherto untranslated) plays, like *Baal*, where he missed the homosexual jealousy of the hero that leads him to murder his friend. He has now caught on to it, however: in his review of my book in your magazine he now refers to the homosexual element in *Baal* as if he had always been aware of it. He should have been generous enough to give me an acknowledgment for having pointed it out to him.

But all these points, amusing though they may be, are of minor importance as against the main tenor, and purpose, of Mr. Willett's attack. Ostensibly this is concerned with his dismay at the "repulsive" picture of Brecht, the man, that my book is alleged to present. It is a curious thing that I never intended to paint such a picture, and that my book in fact frequently expresses my great admiration for Brecht, the man, as well as Brecht, the poet. Nor has it struck most readers as being unsympathetic to Brecht. In fact, Ernest Borneman, who has written the most exhaustive and searching essay on both books up to now, comes to the conclusion that my picture of Brecht is the more sympathetic of the two: "I am moved by Esslin's interpretation and I take away from it the impression of a man most deeply affected by Brecht and most profoundly respectful of his work. . . . It therefore strikes me as a paradox worthy of Brecht himself that of his two English biographers the seemingly more distant should blame the other one (who defends

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Brecht so much more hotly) for his 'mean attack on Brecht's person.'"

How is this paradox to be explained? Partly, no doubt, by the somewhat naïve attitude Mr. Willett displays towards Brecht's ethical concepts. He blames me for pointing out that Brecht's attitude was an unheroic one. To him this appears as a slur. But to Brecht himself, who was so ardent a pacifist that he disliked the very idea of heroism, and made his Galileo exclaim: "Pity the country that needs heroes!" an attitude of prudent self-interest ranked far higher in the scale of values than one of adolescent swashbuckling. I agree with Brecht, and admire him for his attitude. Mr. Willett regards it as a horrible slur on Brecht's character that I suggest that Brecht obtained his Austrian citizenship, that he arranged for a West German publisher to hold the copyright of his works and banked his money in Switzerland, because he wanted to retain a measure of political freedom even after returning to East Germany. But is it really so libelous to suggest that a man of Brecht's intelligence and experience, though a convinced Communist to the end, returned to the Soviet sphere with his eyes open and without any childish illusions as to the risks he incurred? Mr. Willett thinks it a terrible insult to Brecht's memory to suggest that one of Brecht's motives in doing so was his desire to obtain, at last, before he died, an opportunity of running his own theatre. Mr. Willett is so blinded by his horror at this suggestion that he even attributes to me the intention of ascribing to Brecht motives of sordid financial gain. This is completely untrue, but nevertheless very significant

of Mr. Willett's naïve conception of Brecht's motives. According to him Brecht went back into the Communist world because that was "where he belonged." And yet he accuses me of slandering Brecht because I point out that it took him four years before he finally made up his mind to do so, a sign of prudence and realism that I admire, but which Mr. Willett would want to explain away at all costs.

An examination of Mr. Willett's reasons for finding my picture of Brecht so repulsive therefore reveals a good deal about his basic assumptions: he wants Brecht to have been a knight in shining armor, a boy-scout hero, a comic strip superman. Brecht would have roared with laughter at such a picture of himself.

But there is more to this than mere adolescent hero-worship on Mr. Willett's part, that wants to turn Brecht into a mixture between a muscular Christian and the hero of a Soviet film. For this picture of Brecht is not only the figment of Mr. Willett's naïveté. It is also the picture of Brecht that is being painted by the East German propaganda machine, ironically enough, for Brecht himself did his best to prevent such a heroic picture of himself from being presented, and was more than once at odds with the East German authorities, while he lived there. As soon as he was dead and could no longer protest, the full force of the East German hagiographers was let loose on him. His widow and his circle, who understandably want to make their hero appear in a good light, have willy-nilly become the center of a somewhat repulsive cult of Brechtolatry. It is that cult that Mr. Willett serves in a minor

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ception of and voluntary capacity. And this is one of the reasons for the weaknesses of his approach: he gratefully gobbles up the material fed to him from East German sources. No wonder that he feels upset by a biography of Brecht based on a far wider range of material and a far wider range of sources. But the history of artists' biographies shows clearly enough that the writer who relies on the account of a great man inspired by his widow is by no means necessarily the best informed. Quite the contrary! How completely Mr. Willett identifies himself with the widow's point of view is shown by his touching commendation even of myself for having played down Brecht's notorious and amply documented sexual promiscuity.

If Mr. Willett's identification with the East German propaganda exploitation of Brecht merely concerned Brecht's own personality, this might be no more than a rather touching eccentricity. But, alas, such is Mr. Willett's innocence in political matters that he is unable to distinguish between his worship for the hero he imagines Brecht to have been and the uses to which that hero worship is being put. How else are we to explain certain features of his article which must have puzzled a good many readers: after introducing an escape clause ("I do not want to make the East German government appear more enlightened than it is"), for example, Mr. Willett goes to the extraordinary length of explaining that the rising of June 17th 1953, which played a decisive part in Brecht's political development, was of minor importance because only 150 people were killed in the course of it! At the same time he is denying me the qualification

to deal with this whole question because I see it "from the special standpoint of the BBC's German service and the Congress of Cultural Freedom"! This is the technique of guilt by association: as a matter of fact I have belonged to the BBC's German service, but I left it more than eleven years ago. It never occurred to Mr. Willett to verify this although he was in frequent personal contact with me at the time he wrote his article, a good illustration of his attitude toward verifiable facts. My association with the Congress for Cultural Freedom is confined to my having contributed to the magazine *Encounter*, which they sponsor. But so have a good many other critics, like Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Leslie Fiedler, to name only those that occur to me on the spur of the moment. Are they all disqualified from being regarded as serious commentators on our age because they are perverse and prejudiced enough to be associated with a periodical sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom? This line of argument really gives Mr. Willett's game away: in his eyes, to belong to a group of liberals who are opposed to totalitarianism appears as a sin against the spirit, a taint that invalidates anything one writes. I am afraid that I must confess to this sin: I *do* believe in intellectual freedom, I *am* opposed to totalitarianism, I *do* think the Ulbricht regime in East Germany is "heartless and cruel." I also think that Brecht, in espousing the Communist cause, for however valid and deep psychological and factual reasons, committed himself to an extremely questionable course of action, all the more tragic because he could

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not but act as he did. But Mr. Willett will have none of this. To him *The Measures Taken*, the deepest and most tortured statement of the dilemma of ends and means produced by any poet of our time, follows "the Nō drama a good deal more closely than Lenin." Really? Is there nothing of Lenin in "Praise of the Party"?

A single man has two eyes.  
The party has a thousand eyes.  
The party sees seven states  
A single man sees one city.  
A single man has a single hour  
But the party has many hours,  
A single man can be annihilated  
But the party cannot be annihilated,  
For it is the advance guard of the masses  
And conducts its struggle  
By the methods described in the classics  
Which were created  
From acquaintance with reality.

(Eric Bentley's translation.)

Nō play indeed! Samurai ethics indeed! But Mr. Willett argues that I am wrong in suggesting that Brecht was in any way tainted with the evil of our times, as expressed in "Auschwitz, Katyn, Hiroshima and Dresden." Now this list of the great crimes of our age is very revealing of Mr. Willett's attitude. It does not include Vor-kuta for example, or the Stalinist purge trails (with which *The Measures Taken* is concerned), but it does include Katyn, which, very conveniently, is regarded as a Soviet crime in the West, but as a Nazi crime in Eastern Europe, so that Mr. Willett can have it both ways and does not offend his East German friends. The list also includes Dresden, the favorite anti-American "horror" of East German

propaganda. In fact, however terrible Dresden, or even Hiroshima, might have been, they were acts of war, and not acts of political terrorism like Auschwitz or the extermination of the kulaks by Stalin, and have therefore little to do with the theme of *The Measures Taken*.

I should like to make it clear that I have no objection to being attacked from an extreme left-wing point of view. I greatly respect Mr. Lee Baxandall's searching criticism of my book in *Studies from the Left*, for example. But I do object to a political attack disguised, consciously or subconsciously, as an exclamation of horror at my defaming a poor great man who cannot defend himself, and to have it backed up by spurious and unsubstantiated allegations of "inaccuracies" which have no conceivable bearing on the points really at issue. I concede that Mr. Willett is muddleheaded and politically naïve enough not even to be aware of what he is doing. But his uncritical attitude, his humble acceptance of the official legend, have led him into very strange paths indeed, among other things, to the conclusion: "What [Esslins] has given is a very satisfying account of Brecht for those who admire Brecht as a writer and theatrical director but disapprove of the man himself and his political views." If there is any logic in this remark, its corollary must be: you cannot admire Brecht as a writer and theatrical director if you do not also automatically accept his political views. In other words: If you like Brecht, you *must* become a Communist. You cannot like Brecht *without being a Communist*. I hold that these propositions are untenable both

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according to sound principles of literary criticism and of political theory. They make sense only from a totalitarian point of view—and utter nonsense from any other.

Martin Esslin  
London

### REJOINDER BY WILLETT

Sir: It is difficult to comment on a reply which bears so little relation to what I wrote or what I think. Any reader who cares to compare it with my article will find it a good instance of that practice of distortion and unsupported allegation which I criticized in Mr. Esslin's book. In his evident self-righteousness I don't think he understands what anyone can have against this. Whatever may be thought of his attitude, it is not primarily a question of his "slurs" on Brecht or of any supposed "horror" at them; it is that he has selected, omitted, overstated and misconstrued evidence to support a thesis. As a result his book is just about as reliable as his very offensive guesses about myself.

For those concerned with the truth, it is more important to be accurate when dealing with persons or things behind the Iron Curtain than elsewhere, since there is less incentive—social, legal or academic—to correct our mistakes or refrain from wild statements. Propaganda, the ideological war, the Esslin spirit of "who is not with us is against us," all combine to fog the picture. In Brecht's case, moreover, not many people know enough about the subject to notice when a flat assertion (e.g. that he was invited to settle in Moscow after 1933) is simply a guess, or when contrary evidence is being left out. All this made

me feel that I oughtn't simply to sit on my knowledge for fear of the sort of accusations that Mr. Esslin now levels. Of course my position as a "rival" author, which I tried to make clear without undue adverse comment—the footnote giving details of my book was added without my knowledge—allowed him to claim a right of reply; and I can't pretend that I find his way of exercising it agreeable. But it is extremely illuminating for his readers.

Seldom can so long an answer have been less concerned with meeting specific criticisms. However, let me say that the impression given by Mr. Esslin's book was not that Brecht had Nazi views, but that he was hardly a true anti-Nazi. It was a cumulative one, arising from other passages besides the one which he mentions: from his claim that "those who use violence are always seen with admiration by Brecht . . . It is the admiration for the strong man, the doer as opposed to the thinker . . ." (p. 251); and from his unexplained statement that in his "dealings with Nazis" as well as Communists Brecht practised a policy of enlightened self-interest (p. 48). What I then asked him to substantiate was his notion that Brecht ever made a "loud, frenzied demand for violent change." I don't know if his quotations deceive anybody, but the lines from *Saint Joan* have to be taken in their context (the young heroine's dying speech, at the climax of the play), while the song from *The Measures Taken*, in Eisler's original setting, is marked "Largo," with the last three lines pianissimo; this is certainly the spirit of his words.

## The Massachusetts Review

Is Mr. Esslin really suggesting that acts of war are not to be counted among "the evil of our time"? When he uses this phrase in the book's last chapter it is not referring just to the issue dealt with in *The Measures Taken*. Nor did I object to his saying that Brecht was "in any way" tainted, but that he was "deeply" involved and "deeply" tainted. If he now wants to amend what he wrote he should do so openly.

My article made no use of the term "inaccuracies." What I said was that Mr. Esslin makes some surprising mistakes about the plays; and I would not have bothered with them if they had not seemed part of his case. I accept what he now says about *Der Jasager*, and (though what he wrote remains misleading), I agree I should have noticed that he rectifies it elsewhere. But my criticism rested on four other instances which I quoted, and its point still holds good. This is that, unlike errors which really do "have no conceivable bearing on the points at issue" (of which I notified a number to Mr. Esslin privately after the appearance of the English edition) and unlike my own (which he may not realize have been corrected), this sort of mistake cannot be put right without weakening the argument of the book. It is a good test, I think, and his book lamentably fails to meet it. Neither his omissions nor his assumptions can be properly qualified as such without his whole thesis collapsing. Everything depends on their not being questioned.

Could this perhaps explain the nature of his reply?

John Willett  
London

# MR

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